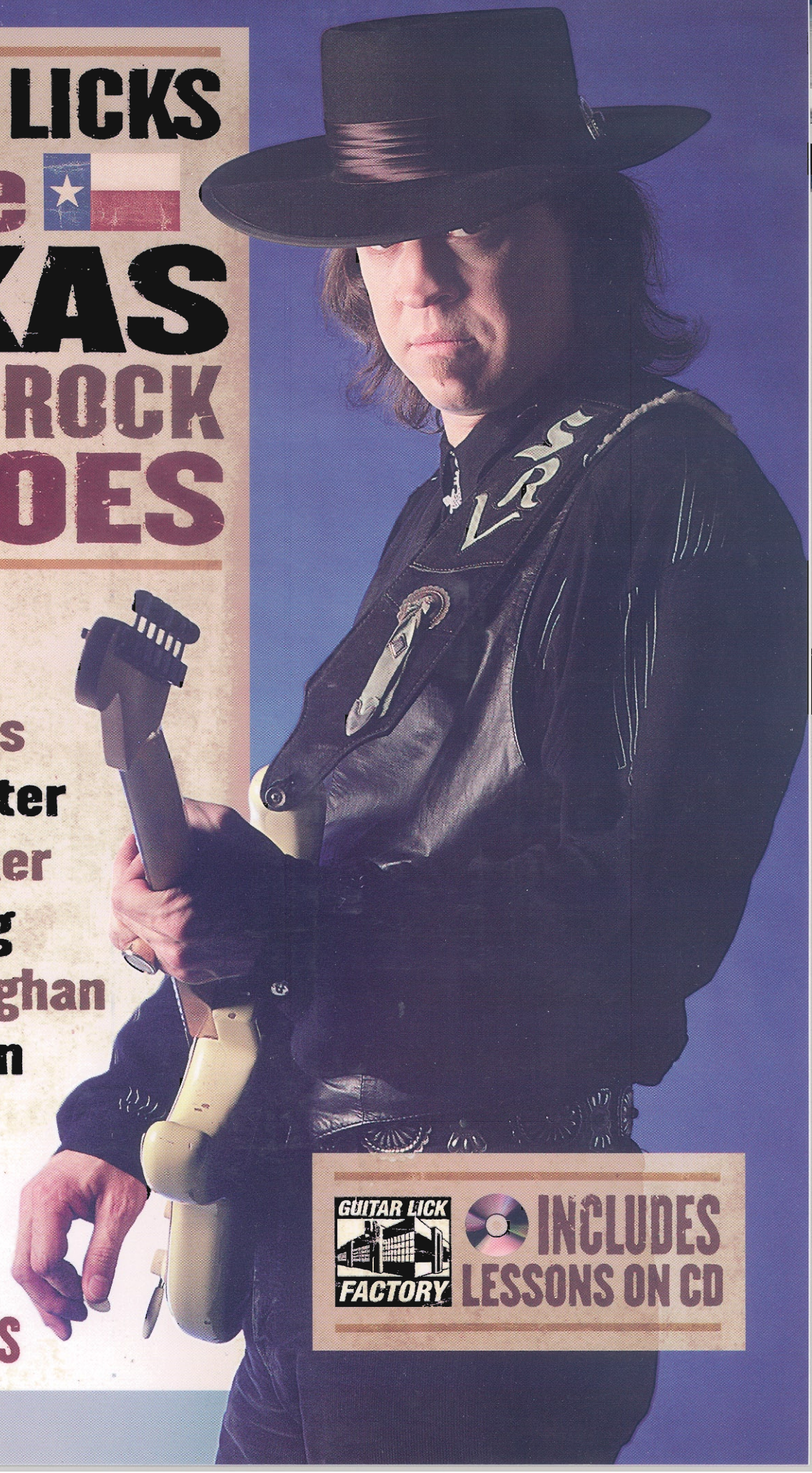
GUITAR LICKS of the TEXAS BLUES-ROCK HEROES

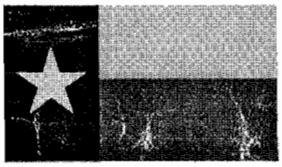


Stevie Ray Vaughan
Billy Gibbons
Johnny Winter
T-Bone Walker
Freddie King
Jimmie Vaughan
Eric Johnson
Lightnin' Hopkins
& More!

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Backbeat Books
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Published by Backbeat Books
600 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
www.backbeatbooks.com
email: books@musicplayer.com

An imprint of CMP Information



CMP
United Business Media

Publishers of *Guitar Player, Bass Player, Keyboard,* and *EQ* magazines

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Distributed to the book trade in the US and Canada by
Publishers Group West, 1700 Fourth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710

Distributed to the music trade in the US and Canada by
Hal Leonard Publishing, P.O. Box 13819, Milwaukee, WI 53213

Text Design and Composition by Chris Ledgerwood
Cover Design by Richard Leeds – BigWigDesign.com
Front Cover Photo by Robert Knight

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gress, Jesse.
Guitar licks of the Texas blues-rock heroes / Jesse Gress.
v. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Contents: T-Bone walker -- Lightnin' Hopkins -- Pee Wee Crayton -- Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown -- Freddie King -- Johnny Winter -- Billy Gibbons -- Jimmie Vaughan -- Stevie Ray Vaughan -- Eric Johnson.
ISBN-13: 978-0-87930-876-6 (alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-87930-876-1 (alk. paper)
1. Electric guitar--Methods (Blues-rock) 2. Electric guitar--Instruction and study. 3. Blues-rock music--Instruction and study. I. Title.
MT599.E4G74 2006
787.87'1931643--dc22

2006009612

Printed in the United States of America

06 07 08 09 10 5 4 3 2 1

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For Mary Lou and Deidre

Introduction

The stars at night aren't the only ones that shine big and bright deep in the heart of Texas. For nearly a century, the Lone Star State has birthed more stellar 6-string slingers than perhaps any other locale. It's hardly surprising—the state has a reputation for all things big, so why should the stature of the guitarists grown there be any different? What is surprising is how many of Texas's brightest guitar stars have had to leave their home state in order to gain notoriety and earn a living: T-Bone Walker and Pee Wee Crayton headed for Los Angeles, Gatemouth Brown moved to New Orleans, Freddie King made his way to Chicago, and Johnny Winter stormed New York. Once relocated, these good Texans proudly proclaimed their heritage as their recording careers blossomed, and strains of Texas blues cross-pollinated across America and, eventually, across the Atlantic.

If you want to learn to play electric Texas-style blues guitar and explore where it originated, where it is now, and how it got there, you've come to the right place. Embedded in the following pages you'll find more than 100 musical examples adapted from live performances by ten of Texas's finest—the cream of the crop.

Our sonic roundup begins post-Leadbelly and Blind Lemon Jefferson—the acoustic grandfathers of the genre—with the seminal electric blues of T-Bone Walker and Lightnin' Hopkins. From there we'll trace the evolution of the form through the jump-blues of Walker protégés Pee Wee Crayton and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown; the wild Chicago stylings of Freddie King; the amped-up Lightnin'-influenced blues-rock of Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, and the Vaughan brothers; and Eric Johnson's future blues.

If the grand blues tradition is to pass the music on, then the roster of bluesmen and blues-rock guitarists in this volume of the Guitar Lick Factory series reads like a family tree. This excerpt from Jimmie Vaughan's typically off-the-cuff Great Performances Online interview with Ed Ward during Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival held in Dallas in 2005 gets to the heart of the matter:

> *"Texas has just as much to do with blues as anyplace. I'd even say it's equal to Mississippi as far as its importance to the history of blues goes. I mean, if you just start with the electric guitar—and blues in Texas goes back way before that, to Blind Lemon Jefferson and all those guys—the first guy to play blues on the electric guitar was T-Bone Walker. That just sort of starts everything. Without T-Bone, there's no B.B. King, and there certainly wouldn't have been me or Eric Clapton! T-Bone learned his music here, and then he went to Los Angeles, which is where he became famous. Then there was Lightnin' Hopkins, from Houston. And those are just the guys who were popular in the 1940s. His protégé was Pee Wee Crayton, who also was very important in Los Angeles in the 1950s, but who was also from Texas, and he wound up influencing a lot of guys. By the time I started playing in*

the mid-1960s, there was Freddie King, another Texan who had to leave the state to become famous. You had to know how to play those Freddie King instrumentals like "Hideaway" if you wanted to work! Just the guitar, period; you think of it as being from Texas. Or at least I do."

– Jimmie Vaughan

(Great Performances Online interview at
Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar Festival by Ed Ward for www.pbs.org)

Add world musician Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown to Vaughan's list and you've got a comprehensive history of the fathers of electric Texas blues.

When traditional blues took a back seat to rock 'n' roll during the early '60s, its audience waned. Ironically, it took a small but savvy group of British art school students named Clapton, Beck, and Page—and an American guy named Jimi—hot-rodding the music of these Texas forefathers, along with their Mississippi Delta and Chicago counterparts, to awaken the interest of this new generation of listeners. The first wave of U.S.-based blues-rock was led by Johnny Winter, whose electrifying style integrated the sound of traditional Texas, Chicago, and Delta blues into the flourishing late-'60s psychedelic rock scene. Winter's phenomenal success, which culminated in a return to a traditional blues format a decade later, opened the door for both hard-edged blues-rockers like ZZ Top with Billy Gibbons, and updated traditional outfits such as the Fabulous Thunderbirds featuring Jimmy Vaughan. Vaughan, in turn, inspired his little brother to pick up an electric guitar, and Stevie Ray Vaughan went on to single-handedly spearhead a national blues revival in the '80s before his untimely death in 1990. And Eric Johnson was the state's best-kept secret for years, but now that the cat's out of the bag, it's safe to say that his toneful style, which blends all of the above with Chet Atkins, Wes Montgomery, and Jimi Hendrix, represents the state of the art in the evolution of Texas blues-rock guitar.

Presenting this collection of artists chronologically by birth date invites an inevitable "fathers and sons" theme, but with a few "sons" straddling elder statesman status, these lines are beginning to blur. One thing you won't find here is an overburden of biographical information; with hundreds of bios available just a mouse click away, I've opted to include more licks—the stuff you can't find everywhere—and let the music do the talking. You will, however, find introductory profiles listing each player's guitars, amps, effects, prime cuts, recommended albums, videos, their influences and who they influenced, plus enlightening and entertaining quotations from all ten guitarists and their peers.

Each lick is preceded by a short lesson and supplemented with tips, suggested accompaniment, applications, and scale analysis that will enable you to use it in a variety of settings. In addition, you can hear each example played at roughly 75% of the suggested tempo on the accompanying CD. (Note: Multipart examples appear on the same track.) Finally, two tuning references appear on the last track—track 99—so that the examples will be aligned with their corresponding track numbers. The first reference is in standard tuning, while the second covers the one-half-step-lowered (*E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭*) tuning featured in Chapter 9.

So tune 'em up and roll 'em out; it's time to hitch up your saddle and hit the dusty trail to Texas blues-rock territory. I'll meet you at the first watering hole.

Guide to Notational Symbols

THE FOLLOWING SYMBOLS are used in *Guitar Licks of the Texas Blues-Rock Heroes* to notate fingerings, techniques, and effects commonly used in guitar music. Certain symbols are found in either the tablature or the standard notation only, not both. For clarity, consult both systems.

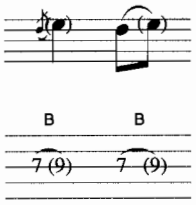
4 : Left-hand fingering is designated by small Arabic numerals near note heads (1=first finger, 2=middle finger, 3=third finger, 4=little finger, t=thumb).

p : Right-hand fingering designated by letters (p=thumb, i=first finger, m=middle finger, a=third finger, c=little finger).

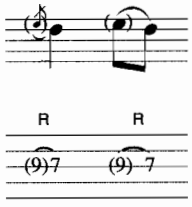
② : A circled number (1-6) indicates the string on which a note is to be played.

⊓ : Pick downstroke.
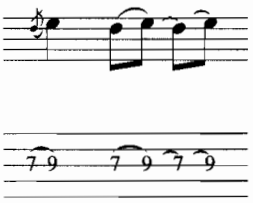
V : Pick upstroke.
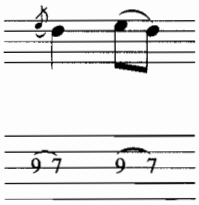


Bend: Play the first note and bend to the pitch of the equivalent fret position shown in parentheses.



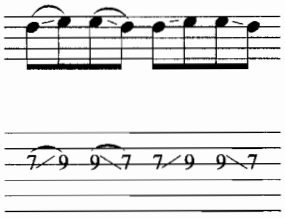
Reverse Bend: Pre-bend the note to the specified pitch/fret position shown in parentheses. Play, then release to indicated pitch/fret.
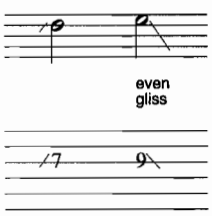


Hammer-on: From lower to higher note(s). Individual notes may also be hammered.
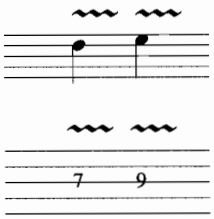


Pull-off: From higher to lower note(s).



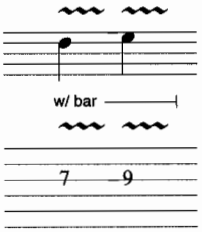
Slide: Play first note and slide up or down to the next pitch. If the notes are tied, pick only the first. If no tie is present, pick both.



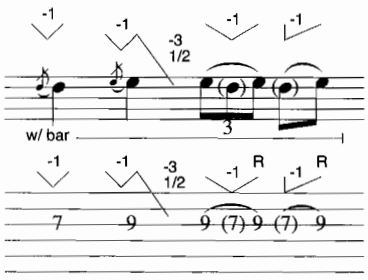
A slide symbol before or after a single note indicates a slide to or from an undetermined pitch.



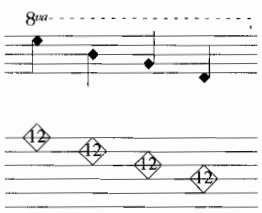
Finger vibrato.
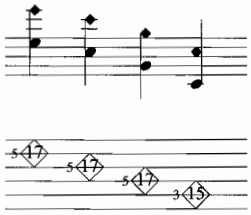


Bar vibrato.



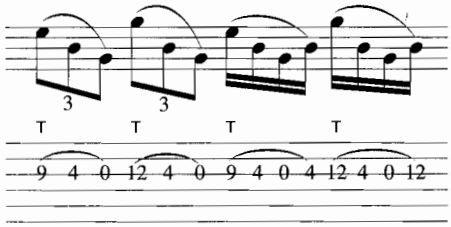
Bar dips, dives, and bends: Numerals and fractions indicate distance of bar bends in half-steps.



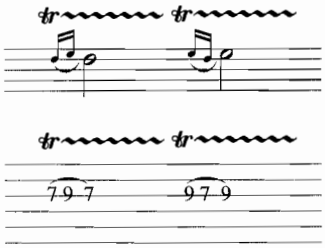
Natural harmonics.
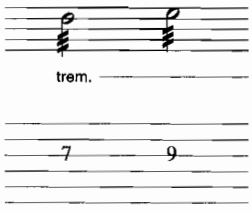


Artificial harmonics.



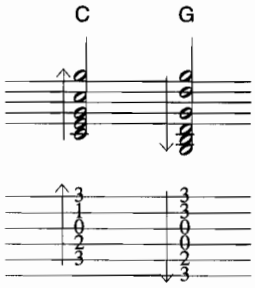
Pick-hand tapping: Notes are hammered with a pick-hand finger, usually followed by additional hammer-ons and pull-offs.



Trill.



Tremolo picking.



Strum: Arrow heads indicate direction.

HOW TABLATURE WORKS

The horizontal lines represent the guitar's strings, the top line standing for the high *E*. The numbers designate the frets to be played. For instance, a 2 positioned on the first line would mean play the 2nd fret on the first string (0 indicates an open string). Time values are indicated on the standard notation staff seen directly above the tablature. Special symbols and instructions appear between the standard and tablature staves.

CHORD DIAGRAMS

In all chord diagrams, vertical lines represent the strings, and horizontal lines represent the frets. The following symbols are used:

— Nut; indicates first position.

X Muted string, or string not played.

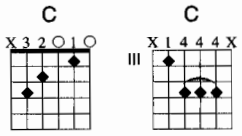
○ Open string.

⌒ Barre (partial or full).

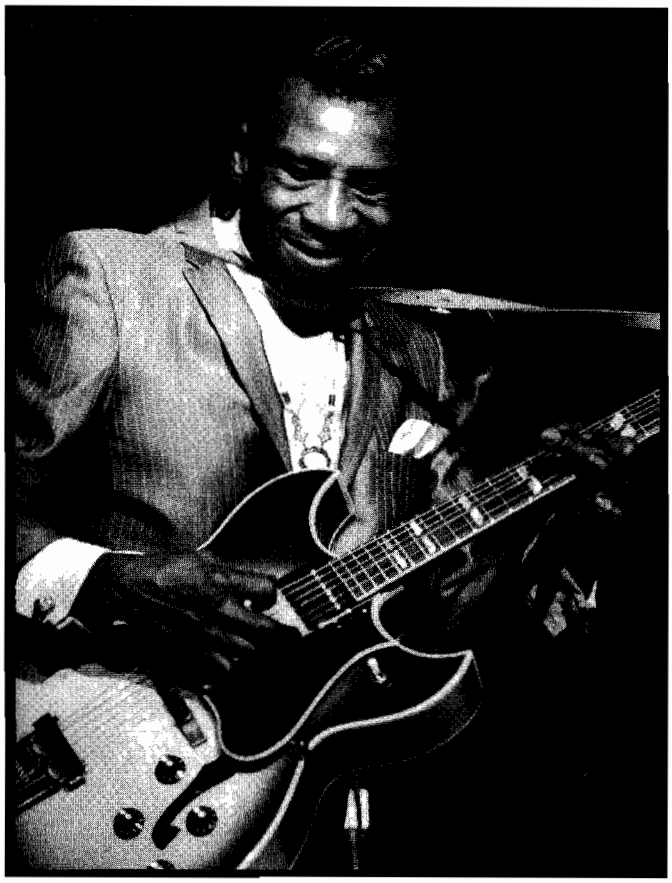
● Placement of left-hand fingers.

III Roman numerals indicate the fret at which a chord is located.

Arabic numerals indicate left-hand fingering.



T-Bone Walker



Profile

Born: Aaron Thibeaux Walker, May 28, 1910, in Linden, Texas. **Died** March 16, 1975, in Los Angeles, California.

Guitars: Gibson ES-250 (1930s–1950s), Gibson ES-5 (1950s–1970s), Gibson ES-335 (early 1970s). Walker occasionally used a Gibson ES-175 and a Gibson Barney Kessel model in the 1960s and 1970s.

Amps: Fender tweed 4x10 Bassman. Walker may have used a Gibson EH-150 in the late '30s and early '40s.

Prime Cuts: "Mean Old World," "Strollin' with Bones," "Call It Stormy Monday," "T-Bone Shuffle," "Love Is Just a Gamble," "Evil Hearted Woman," "The Sun Went Down."

Recommended Albums: *The Complete Black and White Recordings*, Capitol; *The Complete Imperial Recordings*, 1950–1954, EMI/Capitol.

Video/DVD: *The American Folk Blues Festival 1962–1966 Vol. 1*, UNI-M; *T-Bone Walker: Back on the Scene*, Silverline; *Bluesland: A Portrait in American Music*, BMG Special Products.

Influences: Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Christian, Leroy Carr.

Influenced: Pee Wee Crayton, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, Jimmie Vaughan, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Johnson, B.B. King, Albert King, Chuck Berry, John Lee Hooker, Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, and just about anyone else who plays blues and rock guitar.

The Players Say...

*"**T-Bone Walker** is pretty much the father of the electric blues style. He played syncopated, he changed the meter around, he knew a lot of chords, and he did things that nobody else did. He was the first guy who did it right, and he influenced everybody who came along after him. He really defined electric blues guitar."*

– Johnny Winter

(*Rollin' and Tumblin': The Postwar Blues Guitarists* [Backbeat Books], edited by Jas Obrecht)

*"**T-Bone could play** guitar, he could play piano, and he could play bass. He would be playing piano and tellin' me what to play on the guitar—teaching me how to play the blues and how to play in time."*

– Pee Wee Crayton

(*Guitar Player*, July 1977)

*"**When I heard** T-Bone Walker play the electric guitar I had to have one. T-Bone Walker has a touch that nobody has been able to duplicate. He was the first electric guitar player I heard on record. He made me so that I knew I just had to go out and get an electric guitar."*

– B.B. King

(*Guitar Player*, March 1975)

*"**I still listen to him.** What can you say? He started it all—blues on electric guitar."*

– Jimmie Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

*"**There are different techniques** to playing everybody's styles, and it's not just necessarily the amp or the guitar. It's the way you pick, the way you hold the guitar. For instance, T-Bone [Walker] played like this most of the time [holds guitar horizontally, away from his body], and the tone is different when you play that way.... It's the way your fingers hit the strings, and you're more prone to pick closer to the neck when you hold the guitar like T-Bone."*

– Stevie Ray Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, October 1984)

*"**Everybody tried to do it** (but) can't nobody do it like him."*

– Pee Wee Crayton

(*Guitar Player*, March 1977)

*"**The first thing I can remember** was my mother singing the blues as she would sit alone. I used to listen to her singing there at night, and I knew then that the blues was in me too."*

– T-Bone Walker

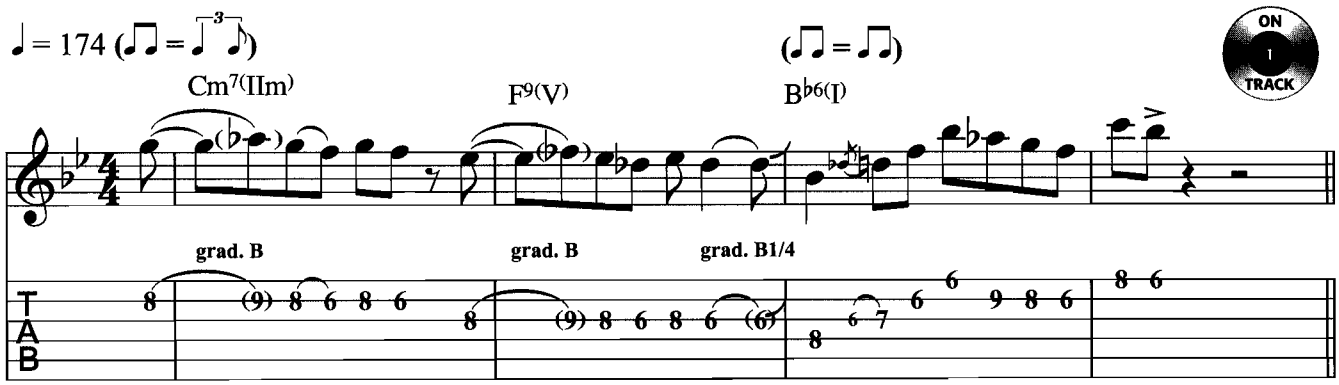
(*Rollin' and Tumblin': The Postwar Blues Guitarists*)

T-Bone Walker–style Licks

Example 1

Let's start the tumbleweed rolling with Ex. 1, a swinging, uptempo jump-blues line played over a jazzy IIm–V–I progression (*Cm7♮F9♮B♭6*) instead of the usual V–IV–I (*F7♮E♭7♮B♭7*). Reminiscent of "Rollin' with Bones," this lick finds T-Bone taking a typically un-bluesy progression and smearing it with bent and slurred blue tones. We're in *B♭*, a common key for horn and keyboard players but one less familiar to later generations of blues guitarists who preferred the friendlier open-string keys of *E*, *A*, *G*, and *D*. Bars 1 and 2 illustrate one reason why you've just gotta love being a guitarist. After establishing the opening lick on the second string, we simply shift the same shape to the third string to cover the V chord. We begin on the "and" of beat *four* with a melodic 6-to-♭7 bend and repeated 6–5 move, which functions as the 5–♭6 and 5–4 of *Cm7*. Moved to the *G* string, this shape yields a melodic 4–♭5 bend followed by the 4 and ♭3, sans the pull-off on beat *two* and embellished with a gradual microtonal bend that peaks on the "and" of beat *four*. The resolution to the I chord in bars 3 and 4 (root, hammered ♭3–3, 5, root, ♭7, 6, 5, 9, root) reveals Walker's Charlie Christian influence, and it's played using straight eighth-notes while the rhythm section remains in full swing. You'll find this signature motif, or some variation of it, in nearly every one of Walker's solos.

Ex. 1



Tip: Strive for a smooth transition between swing- and straight-eighth feels. Practice to internalize this technique until you can summon it at will.

Suggested Accompaniment: Comp common *Cm7♮F9♮B♭6* block-chord voicings on the eighth-note upbeats over a walking, four-on-the-floor boogie-woogie bass line. The combination of these two elements forms the basis of the Texas shuffle.

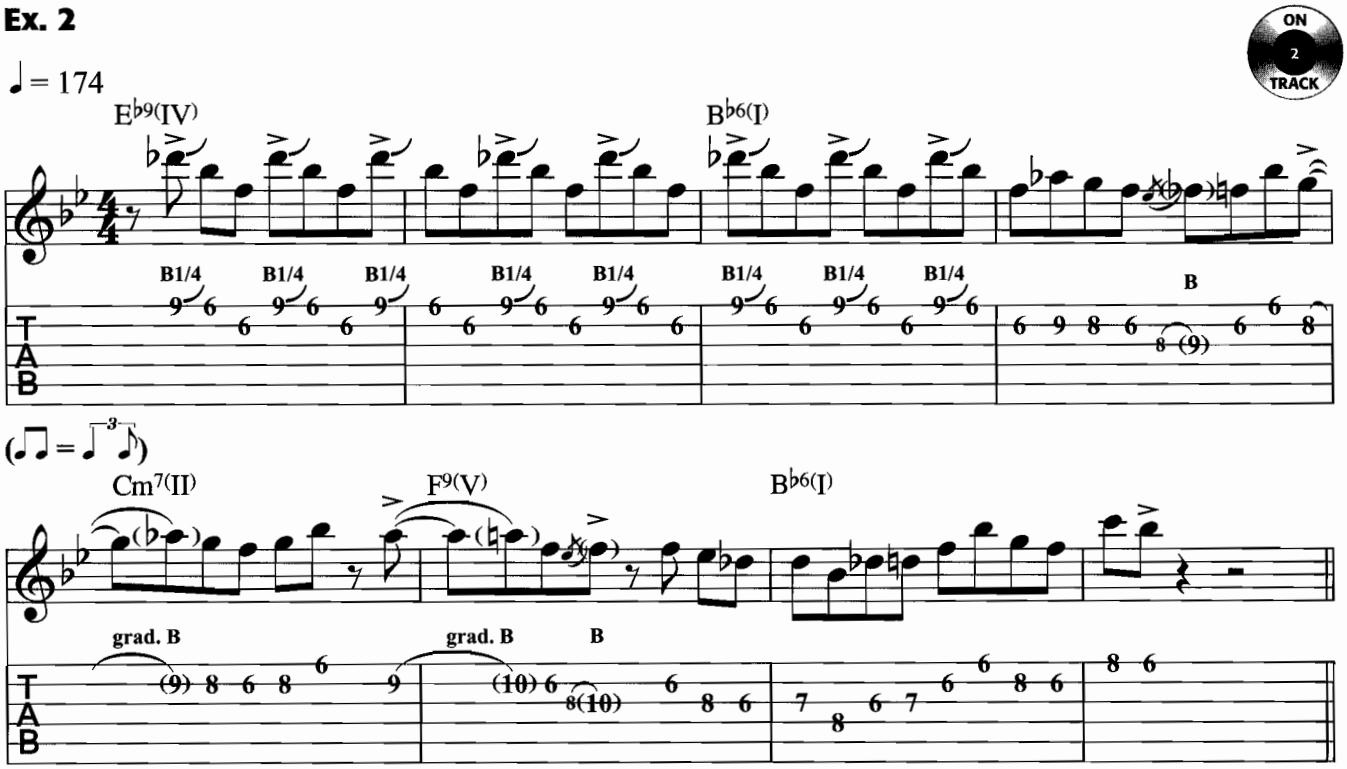
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a quick change or slow change 12-bar *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic major and *B♭* blues/pentatonic minor.

Example 2

Conversely, Ex. 2, which covers the IV–I change (*E♭9♮B♭6*) as well as the IIm–V–I turnaround from the previous example, begins with straight eighth-notes before morphing to a swing feel in bar 4. Walker's repetitive three-note motif is delayed until the "and" of beat *one* and played eight times over the first three bars. This three-against-four subdivision, or *hemiola*, causes the figure to become rhythmically displaced over the course of 12 beats (3x4), or three measures. (Hypothetically, the figure would repeat beginning at bar 4.) The IIm–chord lick in bar 4 is identical to the one in Ex. 1 except for the last note. For the V-chord lick, anticipate the 9th-fret *A♭*, gradually bend it one half-step—an ingenious move considering *A* is the 3 of the V chord—then sandwich a bent 5 (*F*) between two unbent ones and continue to the 4 (*E♭*) and ♭3 (*D♭*). This leads to a I-chord lick consisting mostly of *B♭6* chord tones with an added ♭3 passing tone, capped with the same two notes found at the end of Ex. 1.

Ex. 2



Tip: Try starting the three-against-four hemiola lick on different parts of different beats.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 1, adapted to IV–I–IIm–V–I changes.

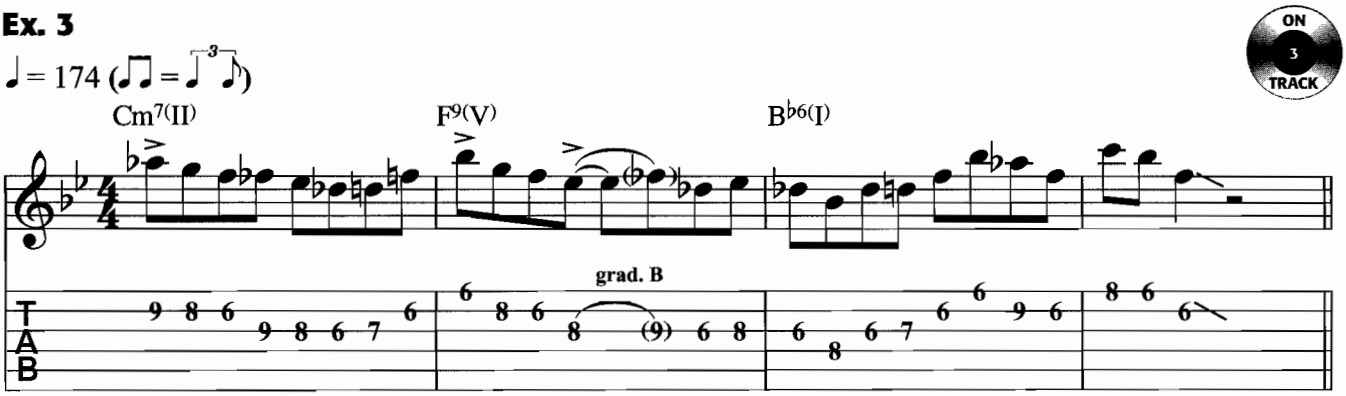
Applications: Play over bars 5–12 in a quick- or slow-change 12-bar *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic minor/blues and *B♭* pentatonic major.

Example 3

Played entirely in the sixth position over another IIm–V–I turnaround, Ex. 3 opens with a descending *B♭* blues scale plus an added 6 (*G*). The 3 (*D*) makes a brief appearance on beat *four* and leads us into a descending root–6–5 line (*B♭–G–F*) that connects to a half-step bend to the ♭5 (*F♭*) followed by the ♭3 (*D♭*) and 4 (*E♭*). Bar 3 again shows how you can plant a big old ♭3 square on the downbeat of a major-sixth chord and get away with it. Here, the *D♭* acts as a chromatic neighbor to the 3, which doesn't appear until the "and" of beat *two*. The rest of the lick should be familiar by now, but this time we sting the 9–root wrap-up (*C–B♭*) with a slide from the 5.

Ex. 3



Tip: Don't believe anyone who says you can't target a ♭3 on the downbeat of a major chord!

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 1.

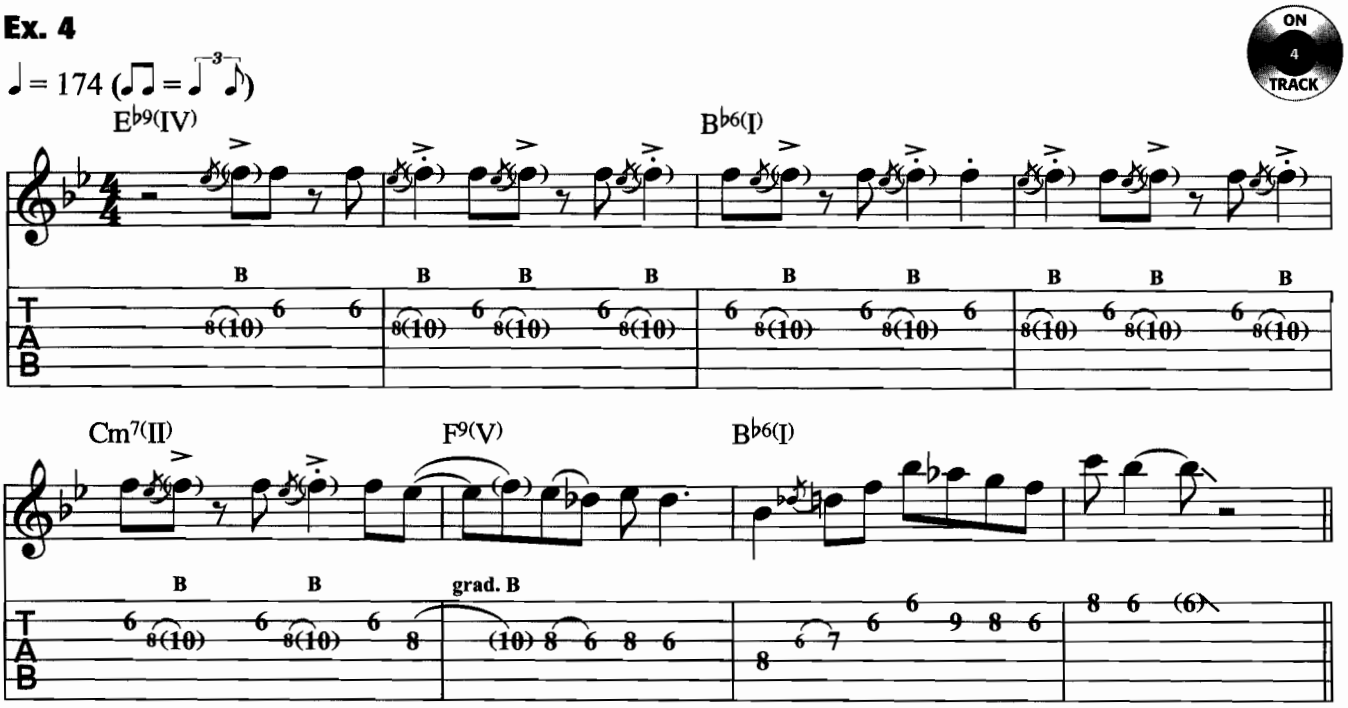
Applications: Play over bars 9–12 in a quick change or slow change 12-bar *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic minor/blues and *B♭* pentatonic major.

Example 4

Many credit Chuck Berry with inventing the type of alternating bent and unbent unison syncopations that inhabit the first five bars of Ex. 4, but it was T-Bone who originally brought them to life many years earlier. The lick begins on the IV chord and establishes another hemiola, but not before opening with a quick variation of this repetitive 3/8 pattern. Check it out: We commence in the middle of the first measure with a bent *F* played on beat *three*, and two unbent ones on the upbeats of beats *three* and *four*. The 3/8 pattern—a bent *F* quarter-note played staccato followed by an unbent *F* eighth note—emerges in bar 2 and covers the next six beats. In bar 3, we play beats *three* and *four* in bar 3 as quarter-notes, which brings us back to the top of the pattern on beat *one* of bar 4. Repeat this pattern, then break away from it on beat *four* of bar 5 using the now familiar moves over the V–I chords in bars 6–8.

Ex. 4



Tip: Try starting the alternating bent and unbent unisons on different parts of different beats.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 2.

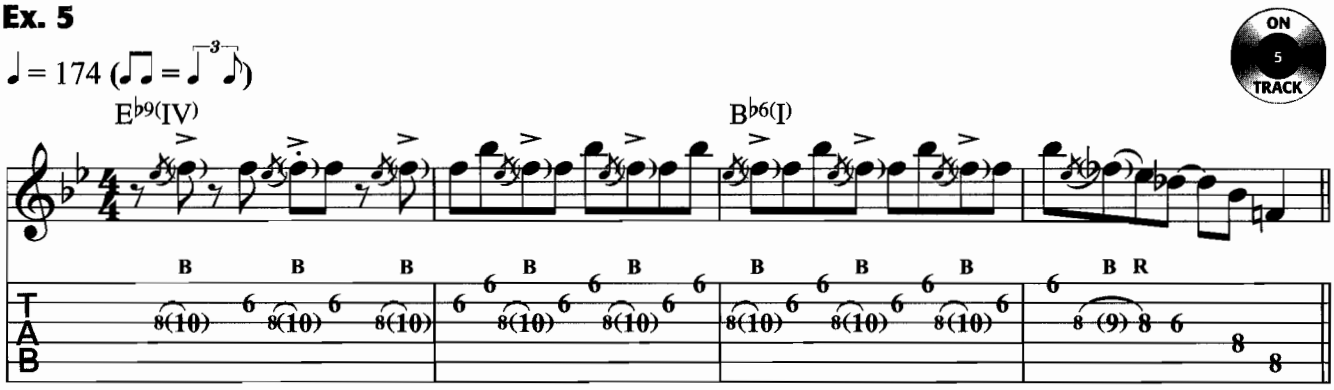
Applications: Play over bars 5–12 in a quick-change or slow-change 12-bar *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic minor/blues and *B♭* pentatonic major.

Example 5

Played over the IV–I chords, Ex. 5 shows an alternate way to break out of the hemiola in the previous example via another 3/8 lick—one that would eventually become a staple in the musical vocabularies of Chuck Berry and a legion of other guitarists. This bent-5/5/root motif sounds great starting on any part of any beat, but in this example we begin it on the "and" of beat *four* in bar 1. The proceedings conclude in bar 4 with another prototypical descending line that few blues and rock guitarists have never played.

Ex. 5



Tip: You can "ride" the type of repetitive 3/8 motifs in Ex. 4 and Ex. 5 through an entire 12-bar blues progression (or two or three!).

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as bars 1–4 in Ex. 2 and Ex. 4.

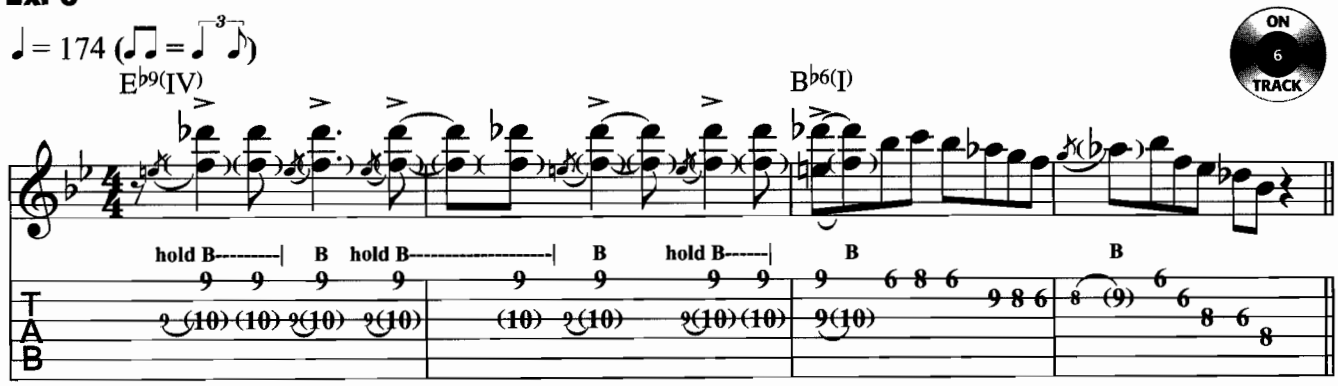
Applications: Play over bars 5–8 in a quick-change or slow-change 12-bar *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *B♭* pentatonic minor/blues.

Example 6

Fret the sixth intervals in the first three bars of Ex. 6 using your third and fourth (ring and pinky) fingers. You probably won't need to reinforce your bending finger to achieve the held half-step bends in this sophisticated IV–I lick (the bent *F* is the 9 of the IV chord), but keep in mind that this move was conceived during the wound G-string era. Check out the cool rhythmic motif in bars 1 and 2. Starting on the "and" of beat *two*, the first event lasts for two eighth-notes, while the second—a held bend—gets one eighth-note, and the third is held for three. This pattern repeats twice beginning on the "and" of beat *four* in bar 1, and again on the "and" of beat *three* in bar 2. The tension breaks halfway through the third repeat with a melodic version of the same bend followed by a lovely I-chord run featuring a 6–♭7 bend and nary a 3 (*D*) in sight.

Ex. 6



Tip: Unlike the hemiolas in the previous examples, the repetitive 3/8 figure in bars 1 and 2 works best when started on an eighth-note upbeat.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as bars 1–4 in Ex. 2 and Ex. 4.

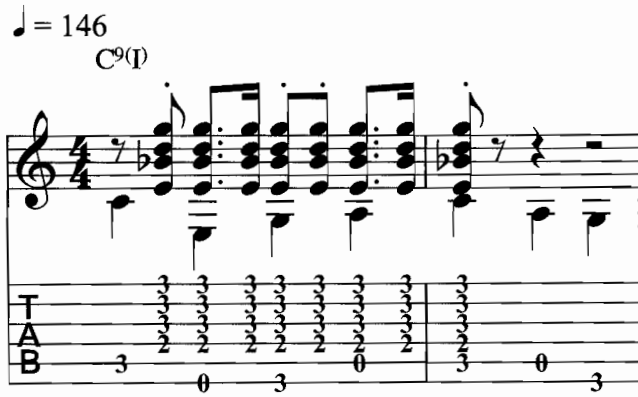
Applications: Play over bars 5–8 in a quick-change or slow-change 12-bar B♭ blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined B♭ pentatonic minor/blues and B♭ pentatonic major.

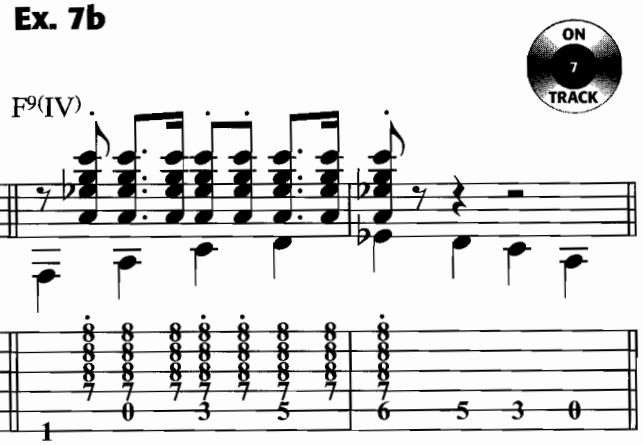
Examples 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d

Walker was also an extremely inventive and influential rhythm guitarist. Taking a cue from Django Reinhardt, the urgent, choppy ninth chords notated in the upstemmed parts of Examples 7a through 7d are played with a straight-eighth feel over a swinging rhythm section and wouldn't sound out of place at a Jeff Beck show. (Note: The downstemmed part in each example is provided to show how this figure works against a typical walking bass line.) The contrast between these 16th-inflected chords and the rhythm section's swing feel set a new standard for rhythmic creativity in the blues genre. Ex. 7a shows the I-chord figure, while Ex. 7b and Ex. 7c cover the IV and V chords. In Ex. 7d, you'll find a variation of the I-chord figure designed as a two-bar turnaround. Drop these figures into a 12-bar blues progression and watch the sparks fly!
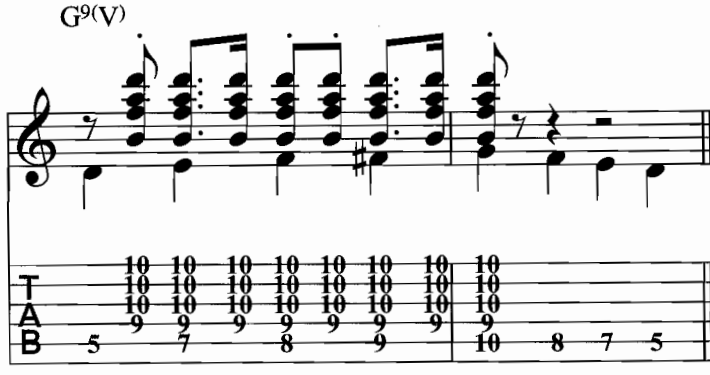
Ex. 7a



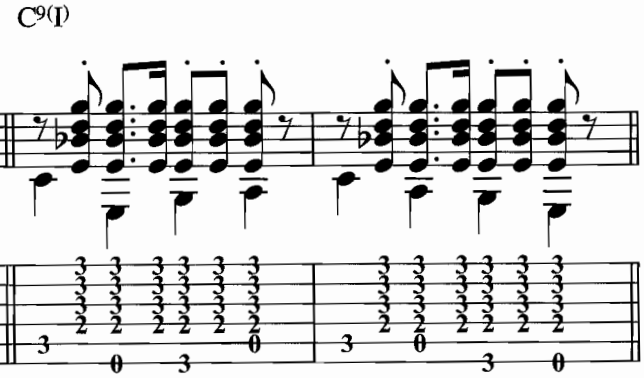
Ex. 7b



Ex. 7c



Ex. 7d



Tip: Playing those 16th-note upbeats with an upstroke will keep you in sync with the beat.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!
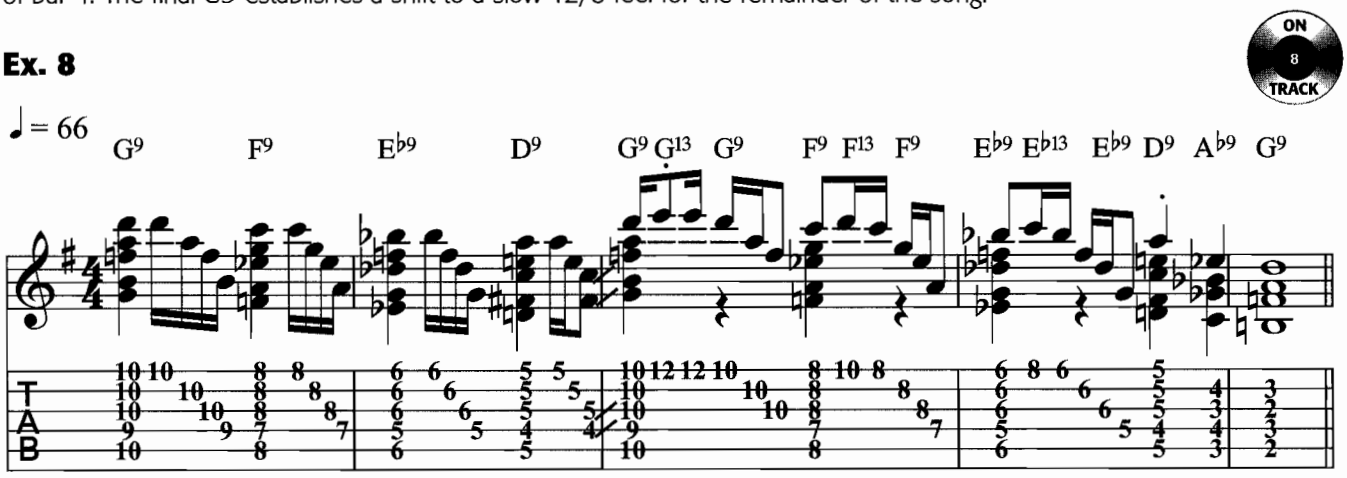
Applications: Plug each chord into its allotted slot in a slow-change 12-bar *C* blues progression. Play Ex. 7a in bars 1–2, 3–4, and 7–8; Ex. 7b in bars 5–6; Ex. 7c in bars 9–10; and Ex. 7d in bars 11–12.

Scale Sources: Not applicable.

Example 8

Our last T-Bone entry is a beautiful chord-melody intro not unlike those heard on "Love Is Just a Gamble," "Evil Hearted Woman," and "The Sun Went Down." Bars 1 and 2 incorporate a series of ninth chords and arpeggios descending a pair of whole-steps and a half-step to land on the V chord (*D9*). Play the full *G9* chord on beat *one* of bar 1, then arpeggiate the same voicing in reverse on beat *two*, allowing each note to ring. Follow suit with the ♭VII (*F9*), ♭VI (*E♭9*), and V (*D9*) chords over the next six beats, noting that *D9* is cut short by a slide back to the ninth-position *G9*. In bars 3 and 4, the chord voicings are identical to those in bars 1 and 2, but the pinky adds the 13, or 6, to the beginning of the first three reverse arpeggios. We stop short on the *D9* and approach the tonic *G9* via its chromatic neighbor, *A♭9* on beat *four* of bar 4. The final *G9* establishes a shift to a slow 12/8 feel for the remainder of the song.

Ex. 8



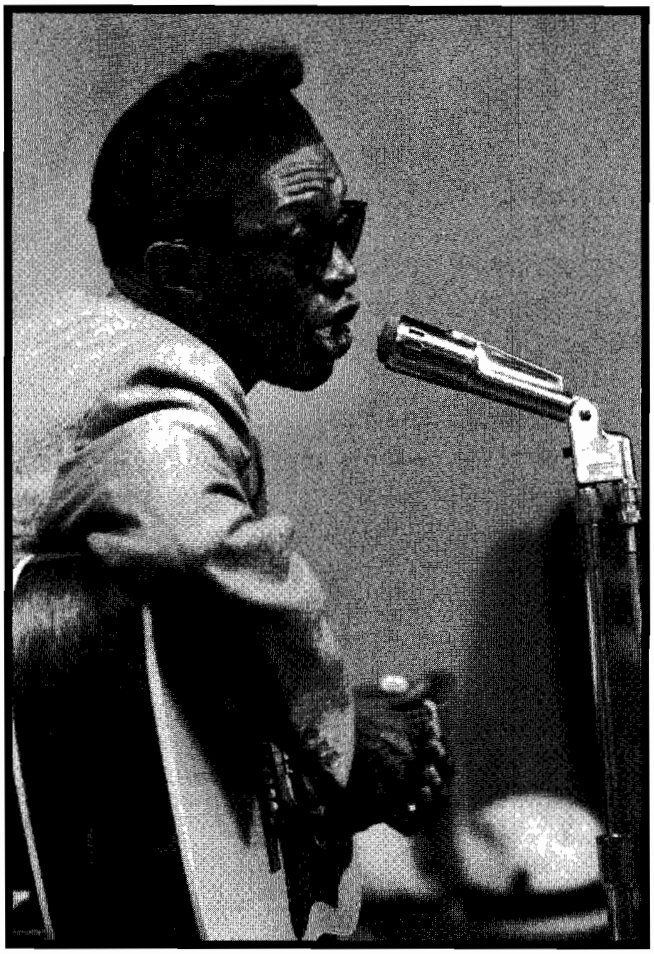
Tip: Hold each chord grip in bars 1–3 and the first half of bar 4 for two full beats.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!

Applications: Introduction to quick-change or slow-change 12-bar *G* blues progression in slow 12/8 meter.

Scale Sources: Not applicable.

Lightnin' Hopkins



Profile

Born: Samuel Hopkins, March 15, 1912, in Centerville, Texas. **Died** January 30, 1982, in Houston, Texas.

Guitars: Gibson J-50 acoustic fitted with DeArmond soundhole pickup, Harmony flat-top, Fender Stratocaster, Gibson ES-335, Guild thinline hollowbody.

Amps: Unknown variety of small tube amps—whatever was available—and possibly a Fender Princeton Reverb.

Prime Cuts: "Short Haired Woman," "Big Mama Jump," "Shotgun Blues," Penitentiary Blues," "Gambler's Blues," "Cotton Field Blues," "Mojo Hand," "Born in the Bottoms."

Recommended Albums: *The Roots of Lightnin' Hopkins: The Complete Aladdin Recordings*, Capitol; *The Complete Prestige/Bluesville Recordings,* Prestige; *Mojo Hand*, Rhino/WEA. (Note: Hopkins recorded more than 85 albums.)

Video/DVD: *The Blues According to Lightnin' Hopkins*, Flower Films; *Lightnin' Hopkins: Rare Performances 1960–1979*, Vestapol; *Lightnin' Hopkins & Roosevelt Sykes,* Yazoo; *Texas Blues Guitar*, Vestapol.

Influences: John Henry Hopkins, Joel Hopkins, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Texas Alexander.

Influenced: Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, Jimmie Vaughan, B.B. King, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Hound Dog Taylor, many others.

The Players Say...

"Lightnin' Hopkins was one of the last of a dying breed. There are always going to be blues musicians, but it's just different with people who really lived the whole thing in the country and can talk about choppin' cotton and pullin' corn and ridin' freights and stuff. Music was his way out of all that."

– Johnny Winter

(*Guitar Player*, June 1982)

"So I went ahead and made me a guitar. I got me a cigar box, I cut me a round hole in the middle of it, take me a little piece of plank, nailed it onto that cigar box, and I got me some screen wire and I made me a bridge back there and raised it up high enough that it would sound inside that little box, and got me a tune out of it. I kept my tune and I played from then on."

– Lightnin' Hopkins

(*Rollin' and Tumblin': The Postwar Blues Guitarists*)

"One of the most distinctive elements of the Lightnin' sound is that turnaround. It's a signature lick that he did in just about every song he played. It's a way to immediately identify a Lightnin' Hopkins tune."

– Billy Gibbons

(*Rollin' and Tumblin': The Postwar Blues Guitarists* [Backbeat Books], edited by Jas Obrecht)

"Lightnin' Hopkins used to play at family reunions–we called them 'associations.' He'd come to my mother's house, and I used to sit on the porch and watch him play. So I started liking guitar."

– Albert Collins

(*Guitar Player*, May 1988)

"When you got a band, you got to concentrate on what to do. When I'm by myself, I just change when I want, not change when I don't want. I can sit there and play a whole lot of guitar and just go to it. Lightnin' did it all the time. He didn't believe in all them bands and things."

– John Lee Hooker

(*Guitar Player*, November 1989)

"Those old records of Lightnin' playing electric with a drummer and a string bass are *rock 'n' roll."*

– Jimmie Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"I had the one thing you need to be a blues singer: I was born with the blues."

– Lightnin' Hopkins

(*Guitar Player*, June 1982)

Lightnin' Hopkins–style Licks

Examples 9a–9c

One key element of Lightnin' Hopkins' style is his use of "dead thumb" open-string bass notes in conjunction with melodies played on the treble strings. This technique combines two separate parts to create the impression of two guitarists. The result, which works equally as well on electric or acoustic, is a big, full-bodied accompaniment that can be heard on such songs as "Gambler's Blues" and "Cotton Field Blues." Examples 9a and 9b isolate the bass and treble parts, and Ex. 9c merges them into a common Hopkins phrase.

Begin the slow shuffle rhythm in Ex. 9a by using your thumb to play the steady open-*A* eighth-notes. You don't want these bass notes to ring, so place your thumb back on the string immediately following each downbeat to "play" the eighth-rests in the middle of each beat. Repeat this line as many times as necessary until it becomes such a motor reflex that you can hold a conversation while keeping the figure steady.

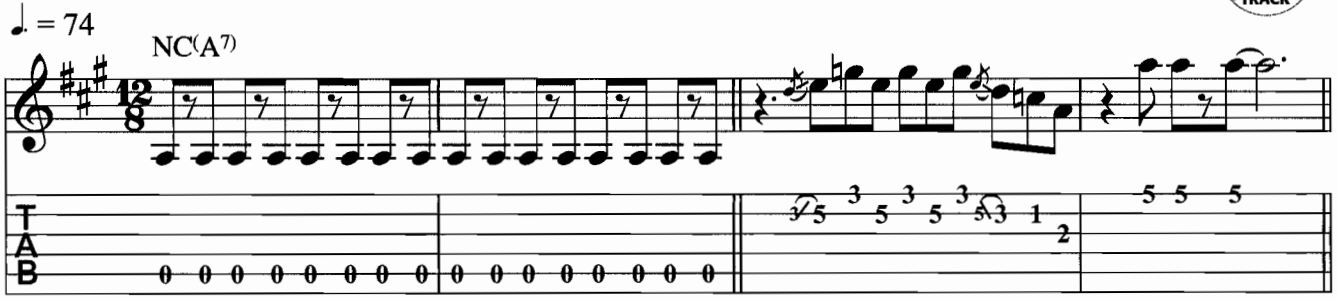
Next, shift your focus to the single-note line in Ex. 9b. Slurring into beat *two*, play the 5–♭7 (*E–G*) motif—a reverse two-against-three hemiola—using your index finger. (You can also incorporate your middle finger.) Allow these notes to ring before moving on to the signature position shift on beat *four*—a slur from the 5 to the 4 (*D*) followed by the ♭3 (*C*) and root (*A*). The three high *A*'s in bar 2 are synced with the thumb-picked bass notes. Note how the top part of this lick sticks to the first two strings. Many other players, Texans among them, would opt to play the same moves in the eighth and fifth positions on the second and third strings.

Example 9c combines both parts. Begin slowly and gradually work your way up to tempo. Think of the lick as one part rather than focusing on its separate bass and treble elements. And don't worry about leaving out or adding a bass note or two; as long as you've got the right vibe going, no one else will notice.
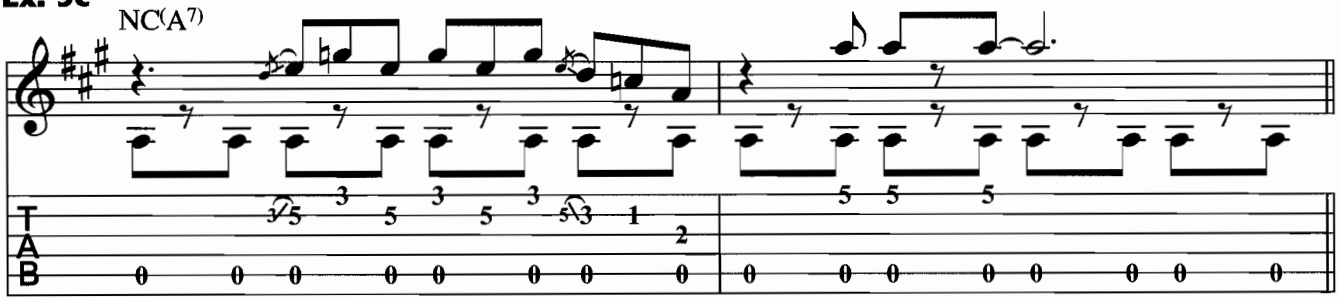
Ex. 9a

Ex. 9b

ON 9 TRACK



Ex. 9c



Tip: Use the *D* string to stop each thumb stroke, that is, let your thumb rest against the *D* string immediately following each open *A*. Classical guitarists call this a rest stroke.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!

Applications: Play over bars 3–4, 7–8, or as a I-chord turnaround over bars 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.
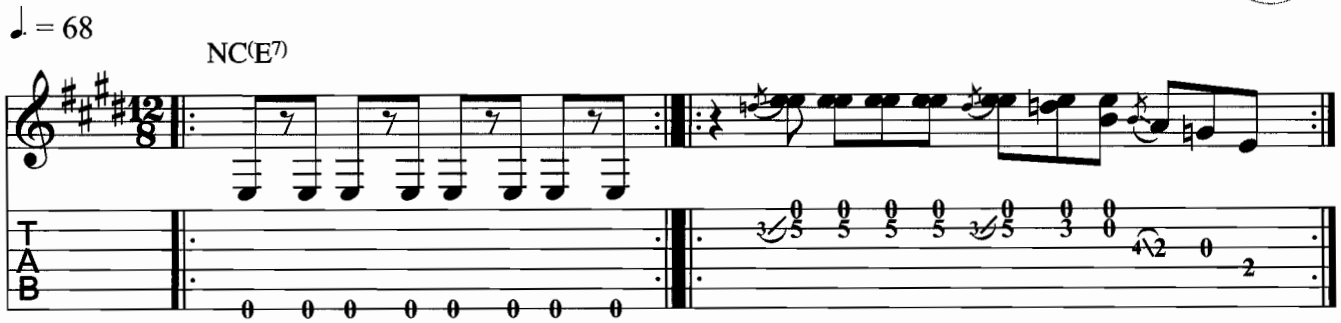
Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor/blues.

Examples 10a–10c
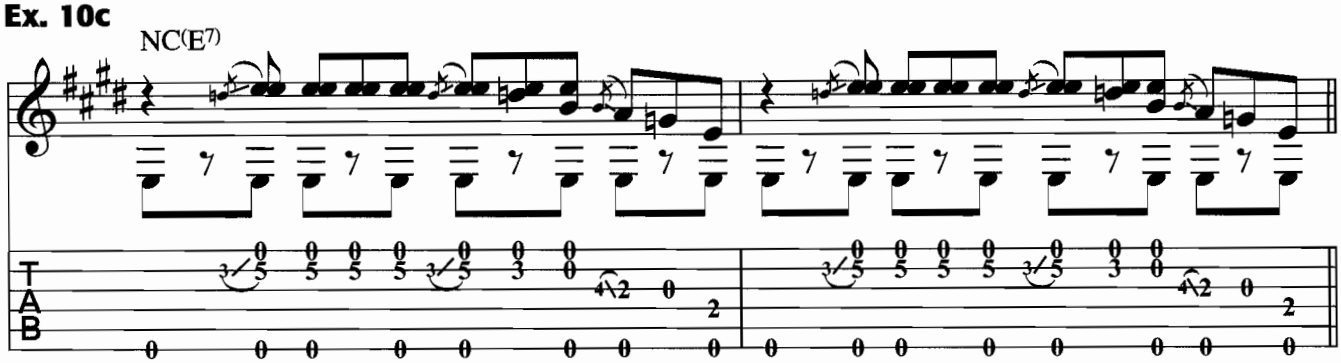
In similar fashion, Examples 10a through 10c dissect a repetitive I-chord lick in the key of *E*. You know the routine: Practice the thumb and index finger moves in Examples 10a and 10b discretely, then combine them until you've got Ex. 10c down cold. The melodic part of this lick has affected guitarists from Texas to Chicago to London for more than a half-century. Hopkins originated this move. This version utilizes an open *E* pedal-tone that doubles and then hovers over a descending ♭7–5 (*D–B*) melody line before concluding with a transposed version of the slurred 5–4 (*B–A*) to ♭3–root (*G–E*) motif we learned in Examples 9b and 9c.

ON TRACK 10

Ex. 10a **Ex. 10b**



Ex. 10c



Tip: Brush the top two strings with an index finger upstroke on the first three beats of each measure.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!
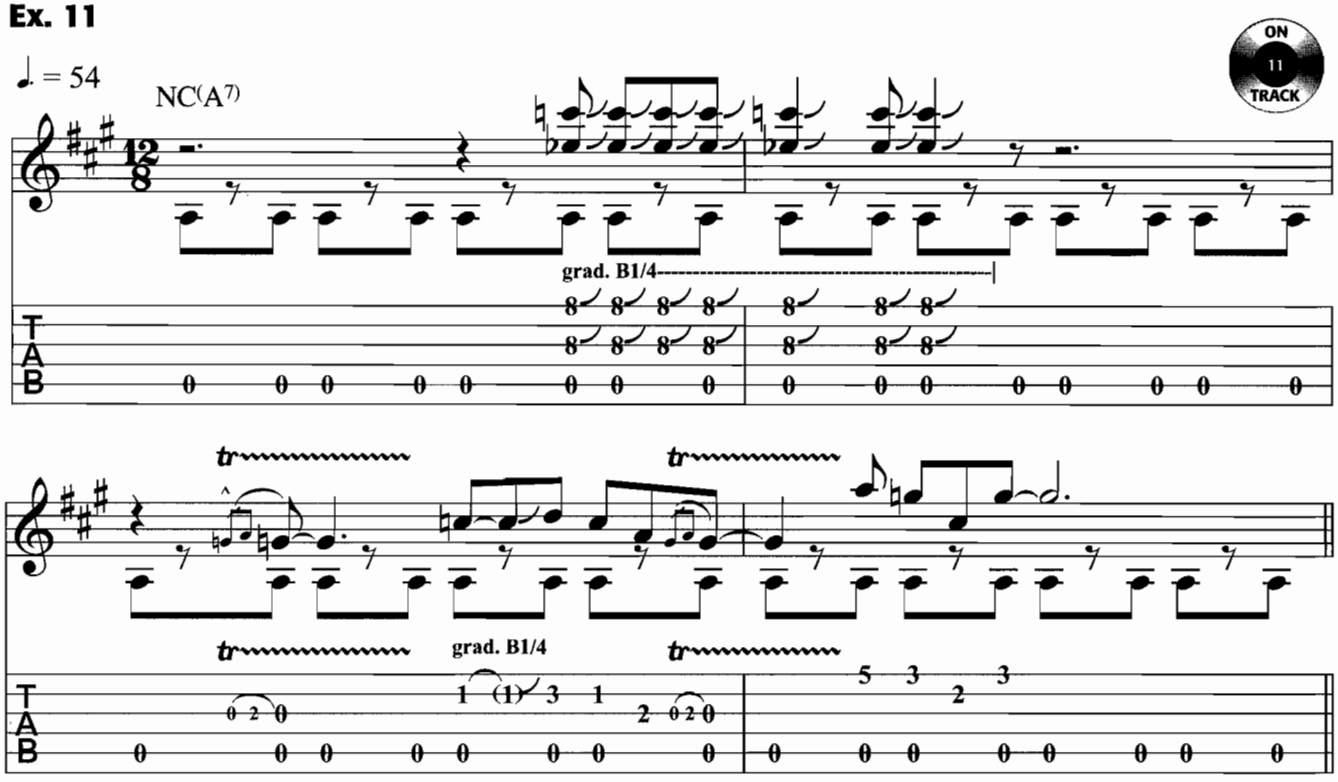
Applications: Play over bars 1–2, 3–4, 7–8, or as a I-chord turnaround over bars 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues.

Example 11

We'll skip the details and leave the dissection and reassembly process in Ex. 11 to you. We're back in the key of *A* for this four-bar riff, distilled from a performance of Hopkins' "Born in the Bottoms." After setting the mood with two-and-a-half beats of dead thumb open-*A* bass notes, we lay into a short string of T-Bone–style sixth intervals. The difference here is that Hopkins gradually bends both notes (*E*♭ and *C*) somewhere near a quarter-step to create a tense *A* diminished sound. We return to stark *A* bass notes less than halfway through bar 2. Drop to open position in bar 3 and "snap" the open *C* to kick off the trill at the end of beat *one* by hooking your index finger beneath the string, pulling it away from the body of the guitar and abruptly releasing it, causing the string to slap against the fingerboard. (This ♭7–root trill became one of Johnny Winter's pet moves.) The remainder of the lick features a microtonal bend, another trill, and an arpeggiated *A7* chord.

Ex. 11



Tip: Many of Hopkins' blues songs did not follow the genre's traditional 12-bar form and chord changes, and it wasn't unusual for him to omit either the IV and V or even both chords entirely. This lick was conceived in a solo setting over a static I chord, but it works just as well with a full rhythm section over a V–IV–I turnaround. Keeping this in mind, you could play Ex. 11 over bars 10–12 in a standard 12-bar blues or bars 9–11 in a Lightnin'-style 11-bar blues progression in *A*.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!

Applications: Play anywhere in a static I-chord *A* blues, or play over bars 1–4 or 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.
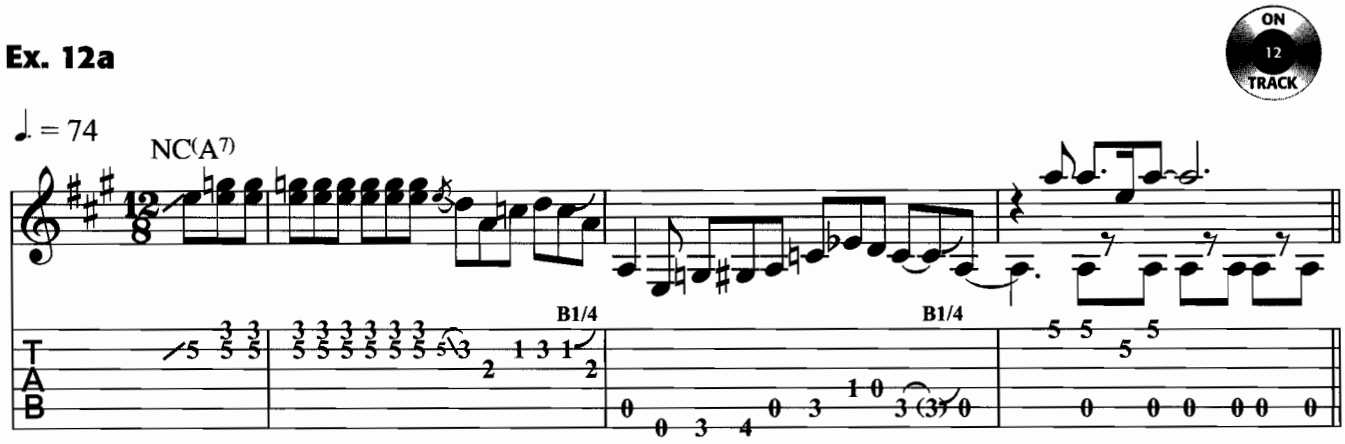
Scale Sources: *A* blues/pentatonic minor and *A* pentatonic major (bar 4).

Examples 12a, 12b

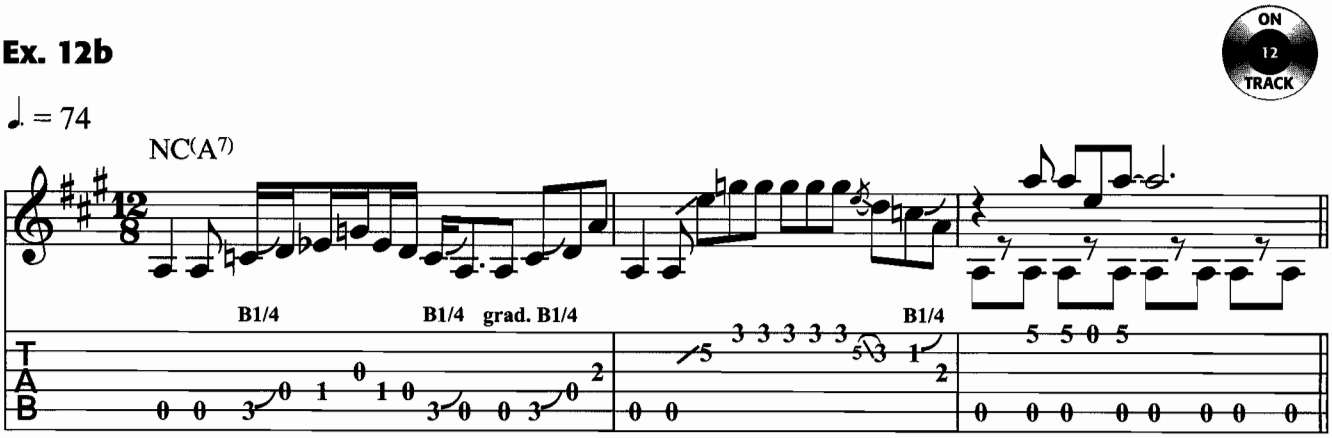
Hopkins often broke away from the dead thumb accompaniment to play intervals or single-note runs, particularly low-register ones such as those in Ex. 12a. In the pickup and first half of bar 1, we merge the broken 5's and ♭7's from Examples 9b and 9c into a harmonic interval by playing both notes simultaneously. Beats *three* and *four* simply permute the notes from beat *four* of the same examples. In bar 3, you'll find the type of signature low-register single-note fills that influenced a young Johnny Winter. This one travels the *E* blues scale with an added 7 (*G♯*) passing tone. The closing lick reinstates the dead thumb bass to imply a one-bar I-chord turnaround—another common component in Hopkins' songs.

Example 12b is similar in form but reverses its components by placing the low-register single-note lick in the measure before a variation of the broken 5–♭7 (*E*–*G*) motif. This time, the bass run blends speedy 16th-notes with some unusually chosen eighths. And while its rhythm is slightly altered, the one-bar turnaround plays the same role as the one in Ex. 12a. Both licks (plus the next one) are reminiscent of Hopkins's playing on "Gambler's Blues."

Ex. 12a



Ex. 12b



Tip: These licks were also conceived with a full rhythm section over a V–IV–I turnaround, but they work just as well over a static I chord in a solo setting.

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues turnaround played with or without rhythm section accompaniment.

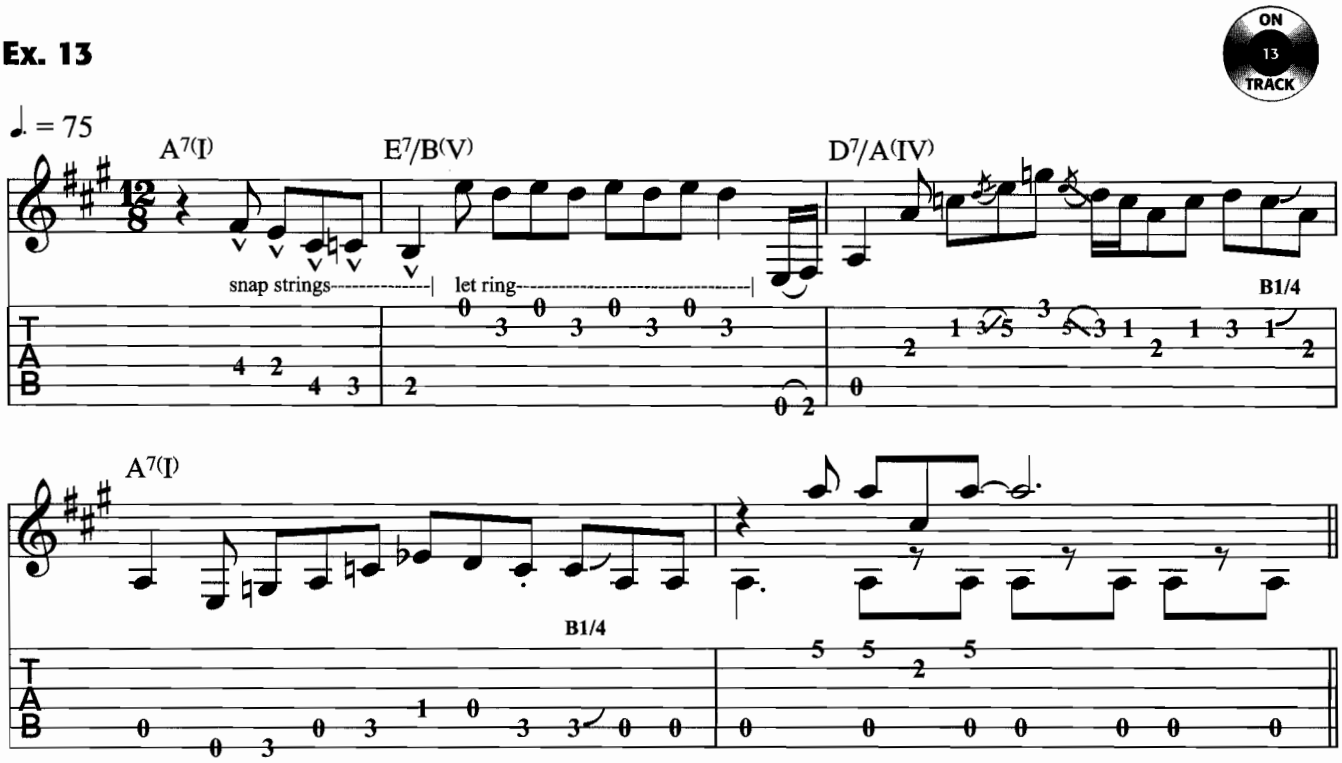
Applications: Play Examples 12a and 12b over bars 10–12 in a standard 12-bar *A* blues or bars 9–11 in a Lightnin'-style 11-bar blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues with added 7 (*G*♯) passing tone.

Example 13

Moving on to a bona fide four-bar V–IV–I turnaround, Ex. 13 shows how Hopkins put his own stamp on this pedestrian progression. Begin by snapping the *D* and *A* strings for the partially chromatic pick-up and downbeat of bar 1. (See Ex. 11 for details.) Allow both notes to ring as you shuttle between the open *E*'s and 3rd-fret *D*'s over the V chord in bar 2. Hammer *F*♯ from low open *E* to approach the *A* on the following downbeat, and continue through the now familiar moves over the IV and I chords in bars 2 through 4. In a sophisticated move that belies his primitivism, Hopkins plays the 5 of each chord on the downbeat of bars 1 and 2—*B* for *E7* and *A* for *D7*.

Ex. 13



Tip: Snap those strings in the pickup and bar 1 with enough authority to let even the most casual listener know you mean business!

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues turnaround played with or without rhythm section accompaniment.

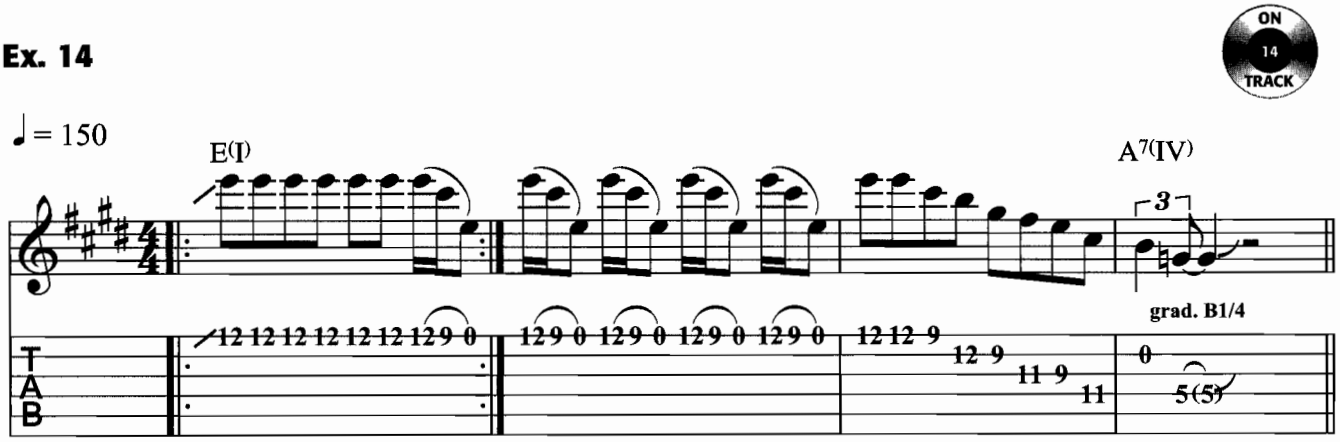
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *A* pentatonic major and *A* blues/pentatonic minor.

Example 14

This example offers proof that Lightnin' could flash with the best of them. This wild and crazy lick—embraced by the likes of Les Paul, Jeff Beck, and Billy Gibbons—brings us back to the key of *E* with a flurry of double pull-offs on the *E* string. The idea is to build up to a frenzy in the first four bars (including the repeat) and then cool off by dropping down to a subdued 5–♭3 move over the IV chord. We set the stage with three beats of even-eighth *E*s before injecting that zippy root–6–root pull-off on beat *four*. After repeating the measure, we play the double pull-off lick on each beat of bar 2 (bar 3 in real time). The penultimate measure features a descending *E* pentatonic major scale (who says scales can't sound musical?), while the last bar engages an open *B* string to buy time and facilitate the position shift to the sweetly bent final *G*. With that, we bid a fond farewell to one of Texas blues-rock's most influential forefathers. Keep your eyes and ears open and you'll find echoes of Lightnin' throughout this book.

Ex. 14



Tip: Raise the double pull-offs three frets while maintaining the open *E* string to produce a ♭3–root–root motif that sounds great over the IV chord. Try riding this or the original root–6–root pull-offs through an entire 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast Texas shuffle. This lick works best as a I-chord breakdown with the rhythm section re-entering on the IV chord.

Applications: Play over bars 1–5 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic major except for final *G*, from *E* pentatonic minor/blues.

Pee Wee Crayton



Profile

Born: Connie Curtis Crayton, December 18, 1914, in Rockdale, Texas. **Died** 1984.

Guitars: Vega Duo Tron, Gibson Super 400 with Charlie Christian pickup, Fender Telecaster, 1954 Fiesta Red Fender Stratocaster (a gift from Leo Fender in an early custom color), Gibson Les Paul.

Amps: 1952–1954 wide-panel Fender Bassman and a variety of unknown tube combo amps.

Prime Cuts: "Blues After Hours," "Texas Hop," "I'm Still in Love with You," "Poppa Stoppa," "Twinky," "Pee Wee's Boogie," "Do Unto Others," "Every Dog Has His Day," "Runnin' Wild."

Recommended Albums: *The Complete Aladdin and Imperial Recordings*, Capitol; *Blues After Hours: The Essential Pee Wee Crayton*, Indigo; *The Modern Legacy Vol. 1*, *The Modern Legacy Vol. 2: Blues Guitar Magic*, *Blues Guitar Blasters*, all on Ace; *Early Hours*, Blind Pig.

Influences: Charlie Christian, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, T-Bone Walker, John Collins, Kenny Burrell, Eddie Young, Elmore James.

Influenced: Billy Gibbons, Jimmie Vaughan, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Walter Trout, many others.

The Players Say . . .

"Although he was certainly inexorably influenced by the pioneering electric guitar conception of T-Bone Walker...Pee Wee Crayton brought enough daring innovation to his playing to avoid being labeled as a mere T-Bone imitator."

— *All Music Guide to the Blues*

(Backbeat Books)

"All the books out now telling you how to play don't mean a thing. What you feel is what you should be playing, not something someone else wrote down. All I can say is learn the fundamentals on your guitar, get to know your guitar, and don't get a big head. There's always going to be someone else better. Just play what you know, what's inside of you."

— Pee Wee Crayton

(*Guitar Player*, July 1977)

"I play what I know I can play, and I don't try to play anything I know I can't play. I play what I feel, what's inside of me. The music, the guitar playing was already in me, but *I* don't play the guitar. You might think this is crazy, but God plays the guitar *through* me. Therefore, ain't nobody can get a sound like me but me."

— Pee Wee Crayton

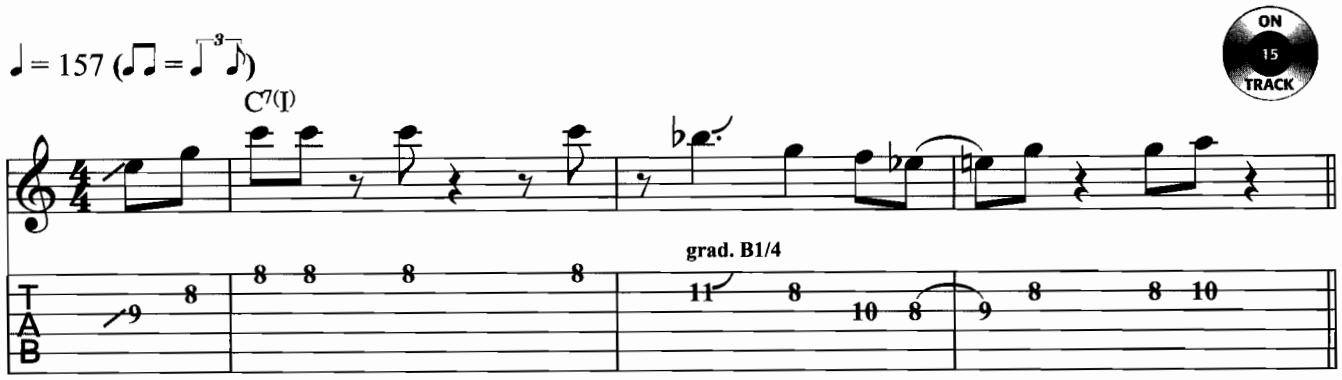
(*Guitar Player*, July 1977)

Pee Wee Crayton–style Licks

Example 15

Oklahoma-born jazz pioneer Charlie Christian's tremendous influence on the second generation of Texas blues guitarists cannot be overstated. Check out how Crayton channels Christian throughout the short-and-sweet I-chord riff in Ex. 15. Slide into the targeted 9th-fret *E* with your second finger and then barre the first two strings with your index to form a first-inversion tonic *C* arpeggio. Lock into eighth position and bop the high *C* four times—once on the downbeat followed by three eighth-note upbeats. The syncopated feel crosses into bar 2 with a quarter-bent ♭7 (*B♭*) on the "and" of beat *one*. (Be sure to milk this gradual microtonal bend for a full one-and-a-half beats.) Continue southbound on the *C* pentatonic minor express with stops at the 5 (*G*) on beat *three*, the 4 (*F*) on beat *four* and the ♭3 (*E♭*) on the following eighth-note upbeat. This note serves as a pickup to the hammered 3 (*E*) on the downbeat of bar 3 and sets the stage for the final pentatonic major phrase, which concludes with a very Christian-esque 5–6 (*G–A*) motif.

Ex. 15



Tips: Try this lick over the first four bars of a 12-bar quick-change blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Moderately uptempo Texas shuffle. Play a staccato dotted-quarter-to-eighth-note swing-feel vamp on the I chord (*C6*, *C7*, or *C9*), or alternate between pairs of *C5–C6* swing eighths, boogie-woogie–style. (Crayton was known to turn this pattern inside-out by playing pairs of *C6–C5*!) Listen to "Poppa Stoppa."
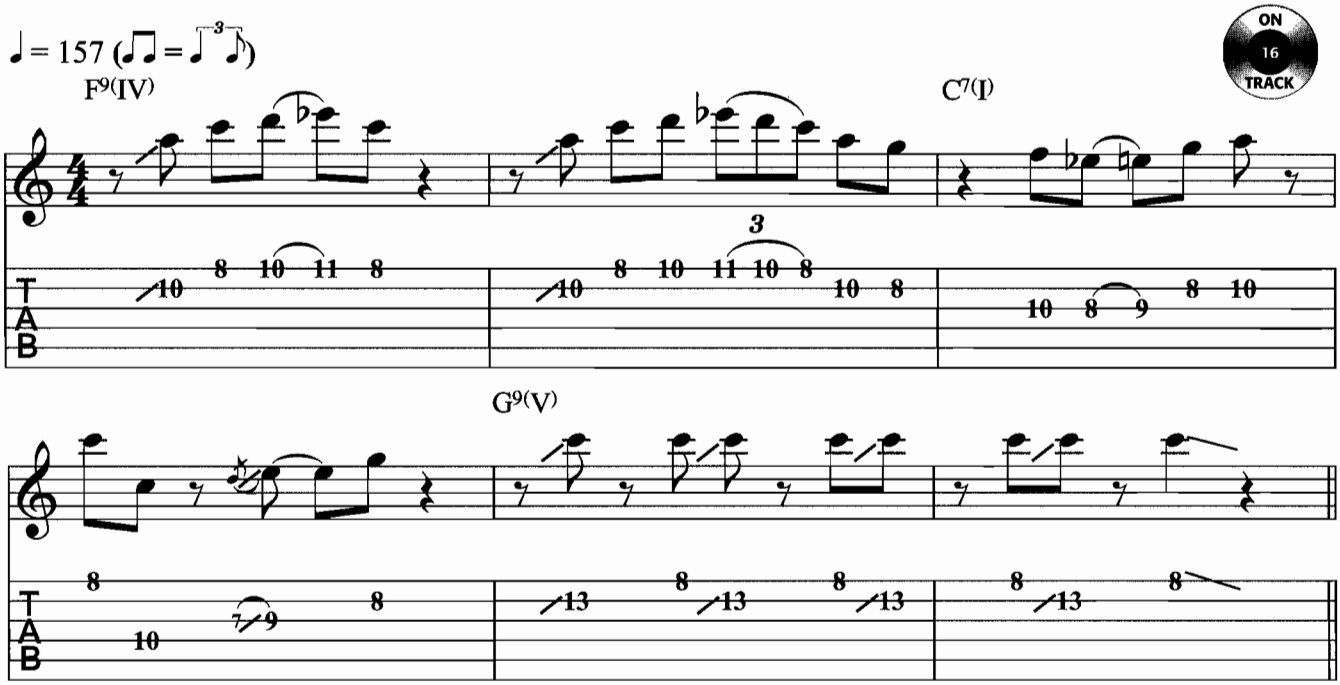
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–3 in a 12-bar slow-change *C* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *C* pentatonic major and *C* pentatonic minor.

Example 16

This six-bar lick played over IV–I–V changes illustrates how Crayton would construct new phrases by building onto his previous ones. The IV-chord phrase in bar 2 echoes bar 1 with the addition of a pulled-off ♭3–2–root triplet (*E♭–D–C*, which function as the ♭7, 6, and 5 of *F9*), and pair of eighths. The 2-bar I-chord phrase that follows pays homage to Charlie Christian right down to the boppy syncopated octave *C*'s, the whole-step slur to the 3 (*E*), and the target 5 (*G*). Note how the first four notes in bar 3 are identical to those that cross into bar 3 in Ex. 15, but begin on beat *two* instead of beat *four*. In both cases, the first three notes of the phrase provides a textbook example of chromatic neighbor tones, as we surround a target 3 (*E*) with both the 4 (*F*) and ♭3 (*E♭*). Finally, check out the short take on a classic T-Bone Walker unison hemiola riff in bars 5 and 6: Instead of bending the first and every other note played between the unbent *C*'s on the *E* string, we slide into unison *C*'s on the adjacent *B* string. Wrap it up with a descending slide from the 8th-fret *C* on beat *three* of bar 6.

Ex. 16



Tips: Look ahead and "sight down" the 13th fret during bar 4 to mentally prepare for the pending unison slides. You can also ride these through an entire 12-bar slow-change or quick-change progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 15 adapted to a IV–I–V progression.

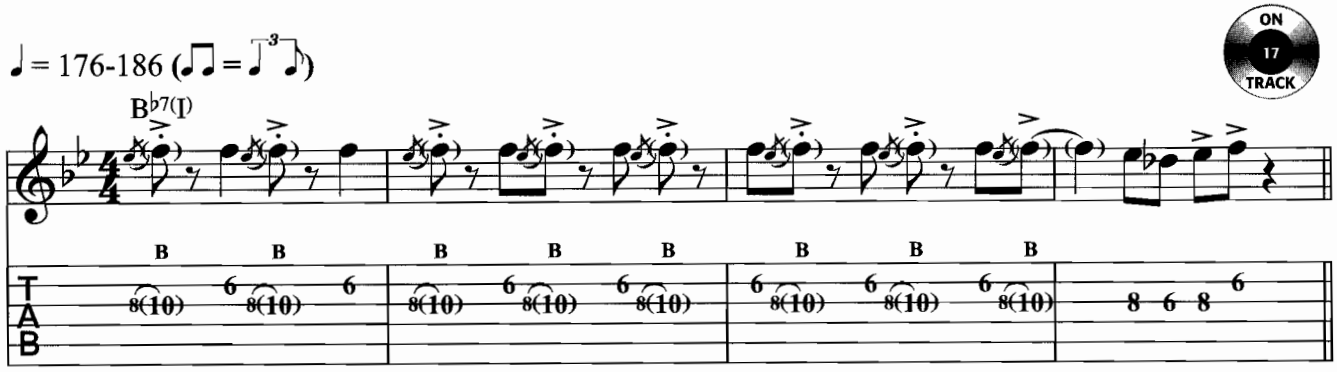
Applications: Play over bars 5–10 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *C* blues progression. (Note the omission of the IV chord in favor of two bars of the V chord in the last two measures.)

Scale Sources: Combined *C* pentatonic major and *C* pentatonic minor, or *C* Mixolydian with added ♭3 (*E*♭), or *C* Dorian with added 3 (*E*).

Example 17

If you're beginning to think that Crayton wasn't a string bender, this lick will set you straight. Pee Wee takes the T-Bone–style unisons hinted at in the last example to even greater heights than its originator by spanking the staccato *G*-string bends with enough force to make them bark like a seal in heat. (Think I'm kidding? Track down a copy of "Twinky" and hear it for yourself.) It seems that everyone has their own take on this run. In this case, we move to the 5 of the key of *B*♭ (*F*), kick the tempo up a notch, and begin with a bar of four-on-the-floor quarter-note downbeats. The trick is to hit the *G*-string bends on beats *one* and *three* hard and cut them short, while allowing the unbent *B*-string quarter-notes on beats *two* and *four* to ring for their full value. The following 3/8 hemiola—which begins on the downbeat of bar 2 and is grouped bent-eighth-note/eighth-rest/unbent-eighth-note—is played five times over the next two bars before concluding with a sustained 3/8 bend and four-note pentatonic minor lick. A hollowbody ax and a honky midrange boost will add to the "bark," and, if you really want to go for down-and-dirty authenticity, slap on a wound *G* string. Yow!

Ex. 17



Tips: Try riding the 3/8 hemiola in bars 2 and 3 over an entire 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *B*♭ blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast shuffle with boogie-woogie walking bass line and quarter-note comping on the I chord (*B*♭*6*, *B*♭7, or *B*♭*9*).

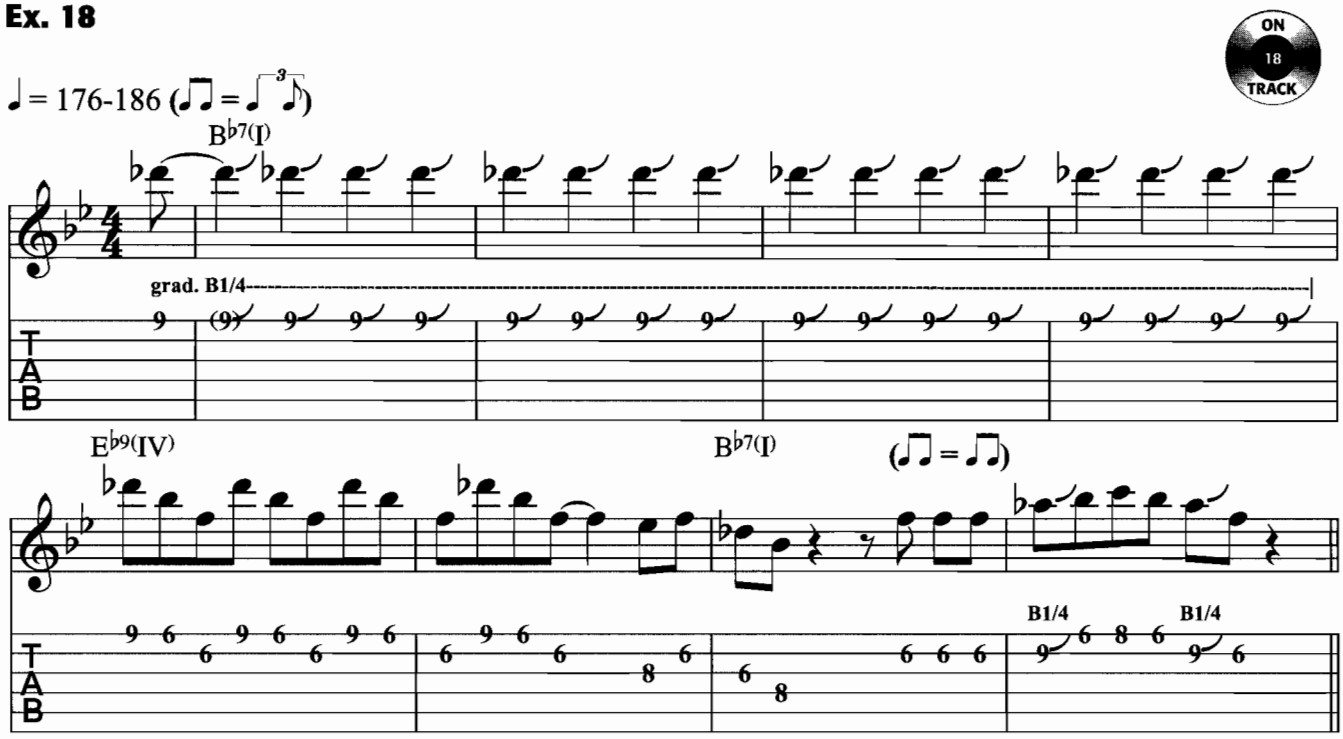
Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *B*♭ blues progression.

Scale Sources: *B*♭ pentatonic minor.

Example 18

The no-nonsense I–IV–I riff in Ex. 18 sounds big and swings hard. Let's break it down into three phrases. The first anticipates the ♭3 (*D♭*) on the "and" of beat *four* before plowing through the next four measures with a string of sixteen quarter-notes, each decorated with a lazy quarter-step bend. The idea is to always keep the note in motion following each quarter-note attack. The IV-chord phrase comprises a 3/8 hemiola (*D♭–B♭–F*) played four times before it resolves to the I-chord via a 4–5–♭3–root motif (*E♭–F–D♭–B♭*). The third and final phrase is another nod to T-Bone, from its choice of notes to the abrupt rhythmic shift from swing to straight eighth-notes.

Ex. 18



Tips: The repetitive motifs in measures 1–4 and 5–6 could be extended over an entire 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *B♭* blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 17 adapted to a I–IV–I progression. Check out "Twinky" and "Texas Hop."

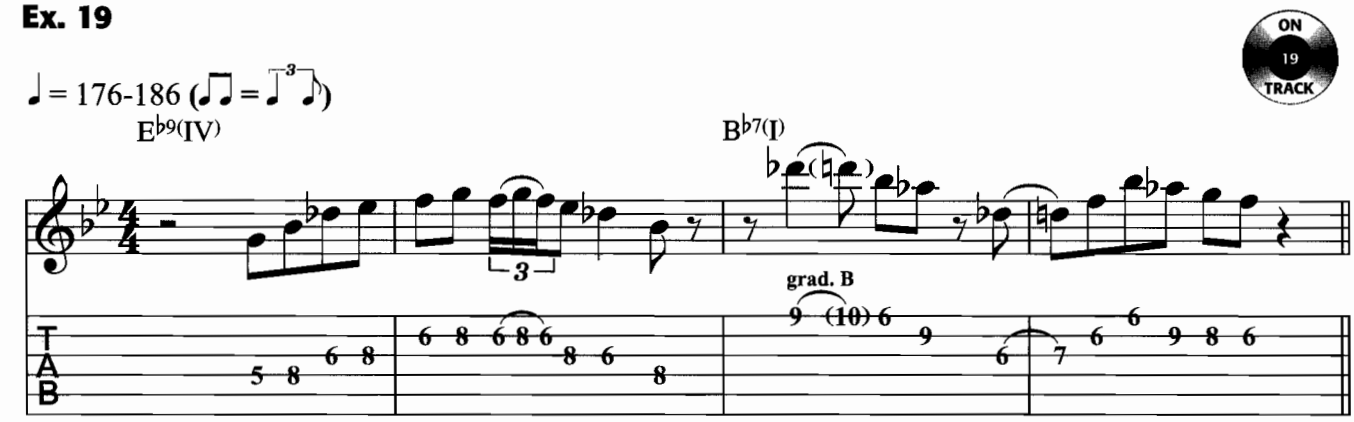
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–8 in a 12-bar slow-change *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *B♭* pentatonic minor (bars 1–8) and *B♭* pentatonic major (bar 8).

Example 19

Still another whiff of C.C. pervades the opening *E♭9* phrase in Ex. 19. This ascending and descending IV-chord line can be analyzed as three different arpeggios: *E♭9* starting on its 3 (*G*), *B♭m6* starting on its 6 (*G*) with an added 4/11 (*E♭*), or *Gm7♭5* with an added ♭6. However you choose to view the phrase, it's a blast to play, particularly the way the hammered-and-pulled 16th-note triplet on beat *two* of bar 2 flips the line into reverse. The return to the I chord in bar 3 features a syncopated gradual half-step bend from the ♭3 (*D♭*) to the 3 (*D*) followed by the root and ♭7 (*A♭*). We cross into bar 4 with a hammered ♭3–3 and continue climbing a first inversion *B♭* arpeggio before ultimately traversing the ♭7 and 6 to land on the target 5 (*F*).

Ex. 19



Tips: Try tagging the "barking seal" bends from Ex. 17 onto the end of this lick to complete the 12-bar progression. Mix and match licks whenever possible.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Examples 17 and 18 adapted to a IV–I progression.

Applications: Play over bars 5–8 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic major and *B♭* pentatonic minor.

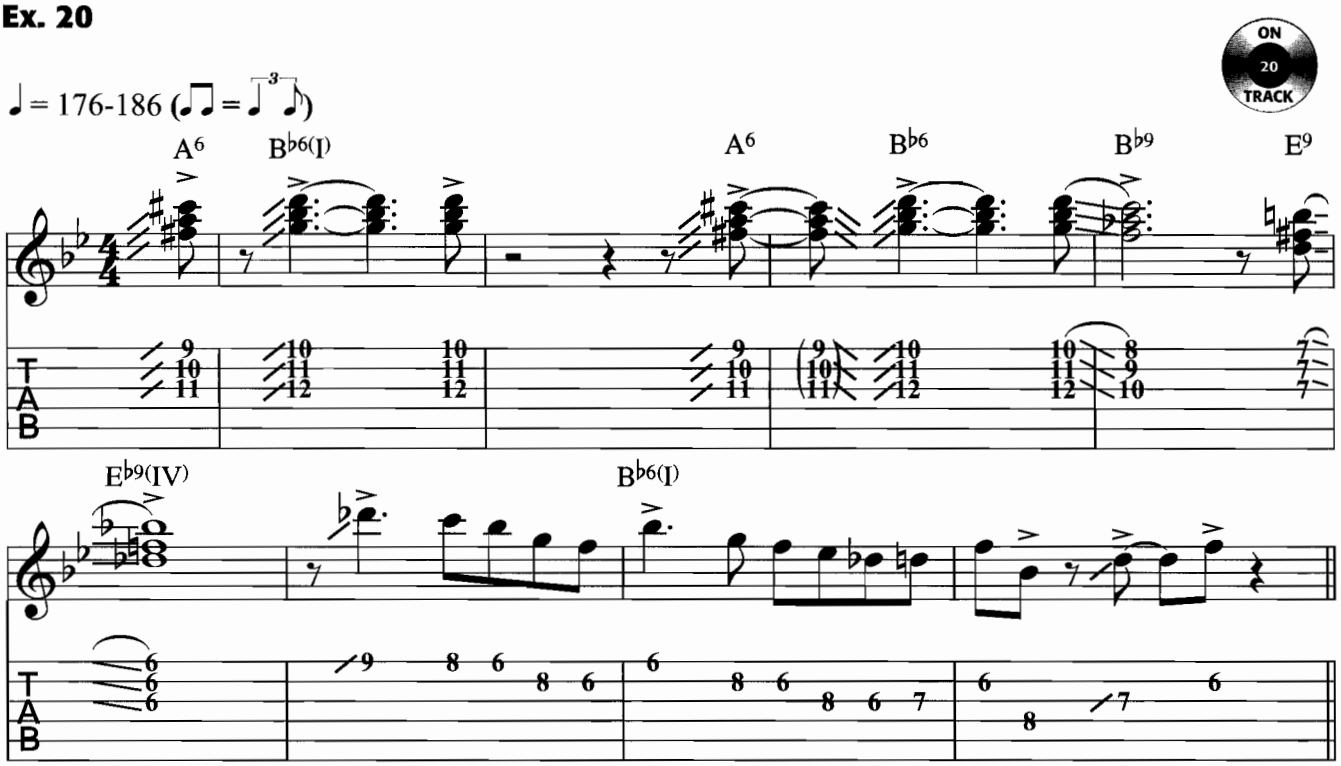
Example 20

The chordal lead that kicks off Ex. 20 harkens back to the type of ensemble figures played by jump and swing bands of the '30s. Syncopated to the max, every chord in bars 1 through 4 falls on an eighth-note upbeat. The *A6* and *E9* chords function as chromatic neighbors and are used to approach the I and IV chords, *B♭6* and *E♭9*. Look closely at these partial fingerings and you'll find some clever substitutions at work—*F♯m* for *A6*, *Gm* for *B♭6*, and *Fm* for *B♭9*. You could even view the *E9* and *E♭9* fragments as *Bm* to *B♭m*. These chordal punctuations give way to a bopping single-note excursion in bars 6–8. Recognize the chromatic neighbors that approach the 3 (*D*) at the end of bar 7 from Ex. 15 and Ex. 16? Each of our encounters with this motif has started on a different beat. (Remember: You

can get a lot of mileage out of all of these licks by rhythmically displacing them.) We've also played the move in bar 8 previously, albeit with an octave drop in place of the 5–root used here.

Pee Wee Crayton also had his wild side. (Just ask Billy Gibbons.) One 12-bar solo features a blindingly fast trem-picked high tonic *C* played at the 20th fret for bars 1–8 followed by a trem-picked even gliss that descends one octave to the 8th fret and ascends back to its starting point over the course of bars 9–12. Whip this one out at your next jam session and get twinky with it!

Ex. 20



Tips: Try continuing the chromatic chordal moves in bars 1–5 throughout an entire 12-bar blues progression.

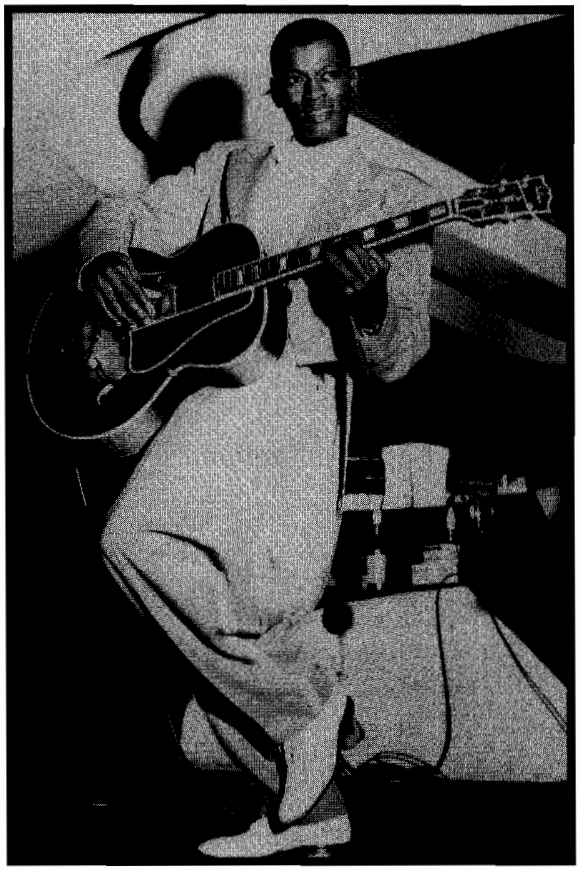
Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 17–Ex. 19 adapted to a I–IV–I progression.

Applications: Play into and over bars 1–8 in a 12-bar slow-change *B♭* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *B♭* pentatonic minor and *B♭* pentatonic major (bars 6–8 only).

Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown

Profile



Born: Clarence Brown, April 24, 1924, in Vinton, Louisiana; moved to Orange, Texas, at age 1. **Died** September 10, 2005, in Orange, Texas. (Author's note: Sadly, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown passed away the week I was writing this chapter.)

Guitars: Gibson L-5, Fender Telecaster, Epiphone Sheraton, Gibson Firebird with custom leather pickguard. (Note: Brown played fingerstyle.)

Amps: Fender Twin Reverb

Effects: MXR phase shifter.

Prime Cuts: "Okie Dokie Stomp," "Gatemouth Boogie," "Boogie Uproar," "Gate Walks to the Board," "Without Me Baby," "Gate's Salty Blues," "September Song," "Pale Dry Boogie."

Recommended Albums: *The Original Peacock Recordings*, *Alright Again*, *One More Mile*, *Real Life*, *Texas Swing*, all on Rounder; *Pressure Cooker*, *Stand My Ground*, both on Alligator; *American Music Texas-Style*, Verve.

Video/DVD: *Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown in New Orleans*, Idem; *The Blues of Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown*, Storeyville Films; *Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown in Concert*, Music Video Dist.

Influences: Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman, Ray Brown, Hoagy Carmichael, T-Bone Walker.

Influenced: Pee Wee Crayton, Albert Collins, Johnny Copeland, Lonnie Brooks, Johnny Winter, Johnny Guitar Watson, Frank Zappa, Roy Clark, many others.

The Players Say...

"Man, that cat, he's something else!
He plays guitar, violin, drums—and he ain't jiving. He made me look so bad!"
— **Pee Wee Crayton**
(*Guitar Player*, July 1977)

"T-Bone Walker and Gatemouth Brown always had shows together,
the Battle of the Guitars, and that really inspired me.
They had the big bands because, you know,
in Texas at that time the bigger the band, the better."
— **Albert Collins**
(*Guitar Player*, May 1988)

"I don't play guitar like a guitar; I play my guitar like a horn.
I play horn parts—actual tenor saxophone parts, trumpet parts.
I can arrange for an entire orchestra. I was the first guitar player
that ever led a big band in America."
— **Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown**
(*Guitar Player*, May 1979)

"He was my inspiration, man. Gate has diversity in his approach to everything.
I think he's still one of the underrated greats.
That show he did on TV with Roy Clark—shit, man!
Not to mention that he's a great violin player. He's a monster, man."
— **Johnny Guitar Watson**
(*Guitar Player*, February 1982)

"I'm a *musician*, not some dirty lowdown bluesman.
I play American and world music, Texas-style.
I play part of the past with the present and just a taste of the future."
— **Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown**
(*Rollin' and Tumblin': The Postwar Blues Guitarists*)
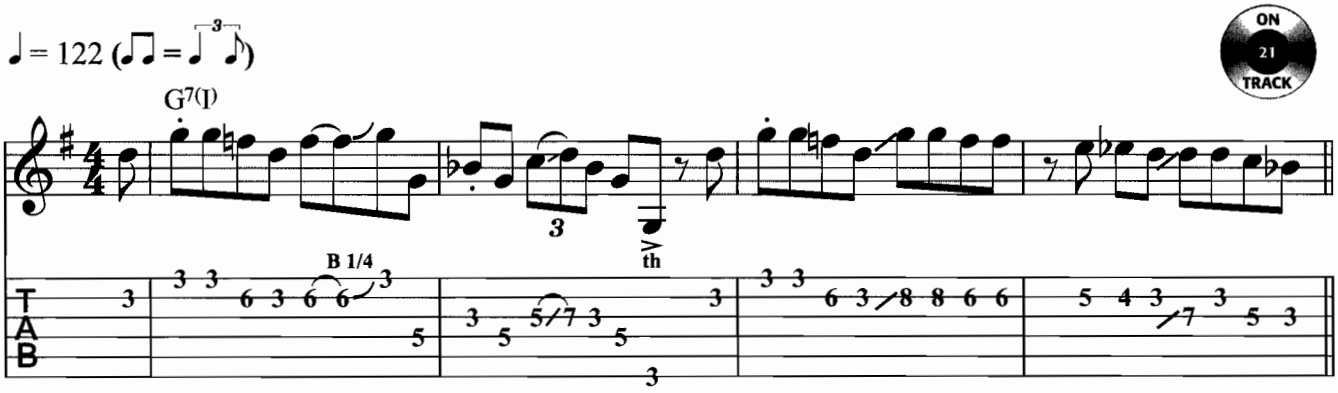
Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown–style Licks

Example 21

This prototypical Gatemouth lick leans heavily on the tonic *G*; it appears in three different octaves in the first two measures and as unisons on adjacent strings in bar 3. These four short phrases reveal volumes about building momentum, excitement, and intensity in a solo at any volume.

Following an eighth-note pickup from the 5 (*D*), we establish a root–♭7-5–♭7–root motif in bar 1 (*G–F–D–F–G*). The response to this call begins with the pickup into bar 2 and leads to a momentary slur out of third position—a move most rockers would accomplish by bending the string. The thumb-fretted low *G* on the "and" of beat *three* provides another classy touch. Think of this measure as a first ending. The pickup into bar 3 re-establishes the opening motif, but this time we create urgency by repeating its first four notes on beats *three* and *four*, albeit with a slight alteration. The slide to a unison 8th-fret *G* on the adjacent *B* string is a subtle but effective way to up the ante. Finally, bar 4 instills a second ending of mixed pentatonicisms, adjacent unisons, and an added ♭6 chromatic passing tone as a prelude to the IV chord.

Ex. 21



Tips: This example also works well as an exciting four-bar I-chord breakdown. The staccato phrasing on the downbeats of bars 1–3 provides a map for rhythm section breaks.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium-tempo Texas shuffle or staccato dotted-quarter-to-eighth I-chord comp played with swing feel. Listen to Brown's arrangement of "Let the Good Times Roll."

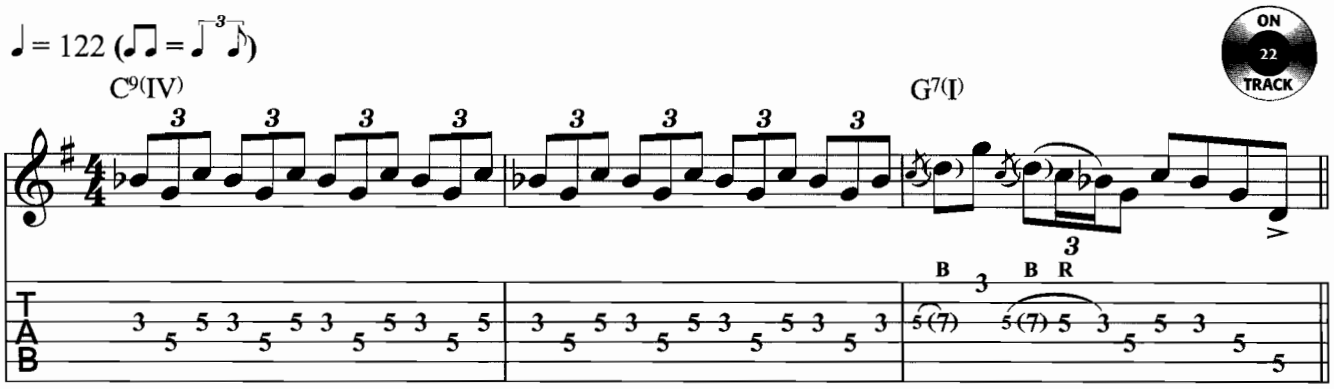
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* pentatonic minor/blues (bars 1–3) combined with *G* pentatonic major with added ♭6 passing tone (bar 4).

Example 22

Continuing in the same groove, the repetitive triplet motif recreates the Hammond organ technique of such jazz greats as Jimmy Smith, "Brother" Jack McDuff, and Richard "Groove" Holmes. It's simple, fun to play, and, since every note is a *C7* chord tone, it works especially well over the IV chord in this key. Break out of the pattern and back to the I chord with the snarly (well, not *too* snarly—Gate kept his sound pretty clean) bends in the *G* pentatonic minor lick in bar 3. You can adjust its attitude by playing either or both bends as half-steps.

Ex. 22



Tips: Try adding a major-third harmony on top of the first and last notes of each triplet in bars 1 and 2 and riding the resultant double-stops over an entire 12-bar progression. You'll find these third harmonies at the same fret on the adjacent *B* string.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 21 adapted to IV–I changes.

Applications: Play over bars 5–7 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* pentatonic minor/blues.

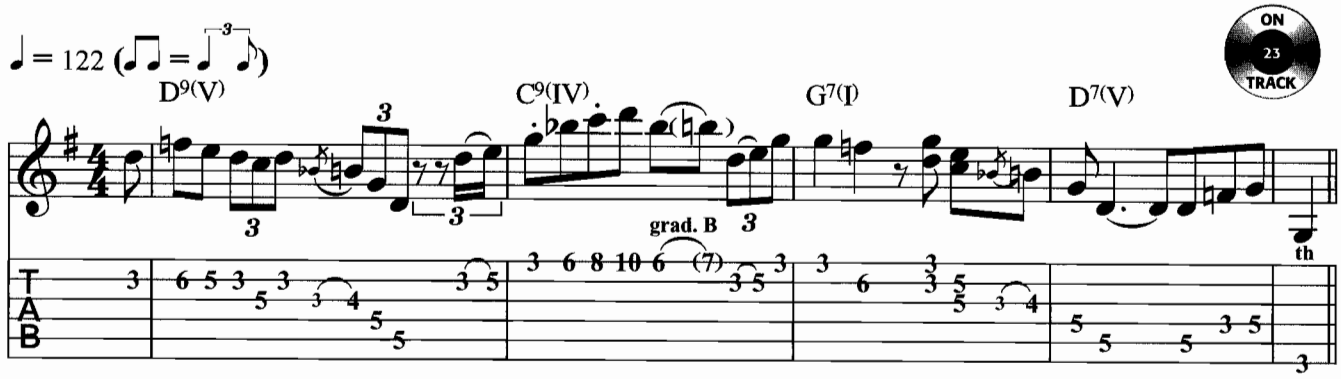
Example 23

You can learn a lot about guitarists by the way they approach turnarounds. I've always maintained that bars 9–12 in a standard 12-bar blues progression serve as a musical watering holes of sorts—a spot where one draws from deep within the well to rehydrate for chorus after chorus. And it is here that you'll often find a steady recurrence of a player's pet licks.

Example 23 swings mightily through a V–IV–I–V turnaround and reveals more than a few signature Gatemouth moves. Beginning with a *D* pickup into a *G* Dorian snippet (you could also view this as a combination of *G* pentatonic minor and *G* pentatonic major), we follow the ♭7 (*F*) and 6 (*E*) down to the 5 (*D*). This ignites a pair of triplets, the second of which forms a descending *G* major arpeggio with a hammered ♭3–3 (*B*♭–*B*). The short 16th-note pickup into bar 2 leads to a ride up the

E string with stops at the root, ♭3, 4, and 5, which serve as the 5, ♭7, root, and 9 of the IV chord. Use your third finger to grab *B*♭, *C*, and *D* at the sixth, eighth, and tenth frets, play the gradually-bent *B* with your index finger, and drop back into third position for the last triplet. The remainder of the turnaround incorporates the root and ♭7, a pair of double-stops, a ♭3–3 hammer-on, and short pentatonic minor motif topped with a thumb-fretted *G* on the downbeat of the next chorus.

Ex. 23



Tips: Try playing this riff (sans the final *G*) over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression. You can form an entire 12-bar solo chorus by playing Ex. 21, Ex. 22, and Ex. 23 back-to-back, though you'll need to rest for three-and-a-half beats in bar 8 to make up for the missing measure in Ex. 22.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 21 and Ex. 22 adapted to V–IV–I–V changes.
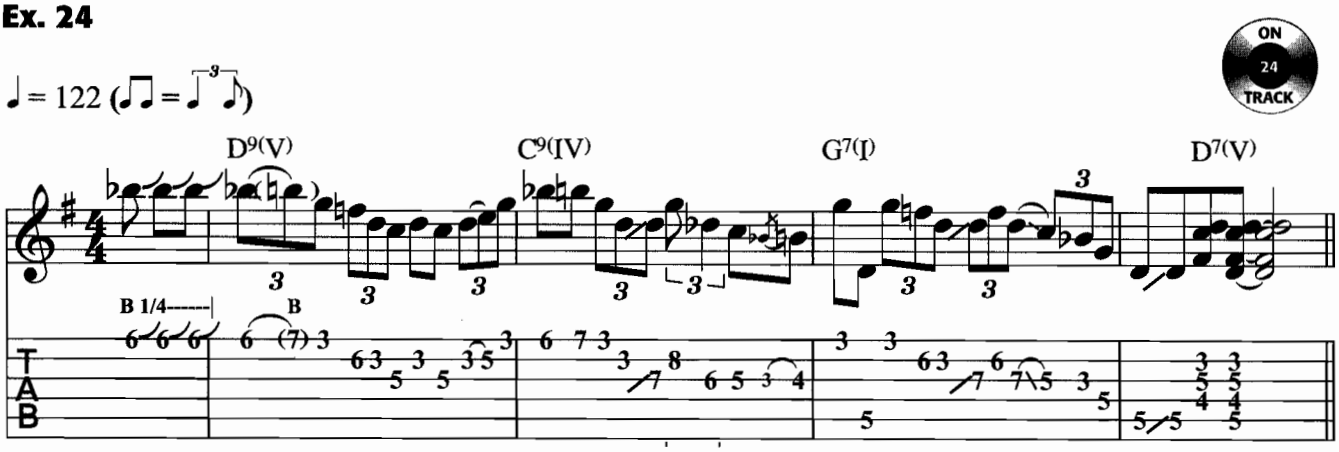
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* Dorian or combined *G* pentatonic minor/blues and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 24

Three quarter-bent eighth-notes pave the path to the V–IV–I–V turnaround in Ex. 24. You can cover the busy triplets in bar 1 in the third position, but you'll have to stretch your middle finger or pinky to catch the 7th-fret *B* in bar 2. The triplet on beat *two* of bar 2 contains a descending root–5 (*G–D*) move followed by a slide into the same *D* on the adjacent third string. The lopsided triplet on beat 3 arpeggiates a tritone (♭5) interval from *G* down to *D*♭—very cool—before moving to the 4 and a grace-hammered ♭3–3 (*B*♭*–B*) pickup into the next measure. A giant intervallic leap sets up bar 3's quick excursion in and out of sixth position, and bar 4 completes the 12-bar cycle with a slide into a pair of punctuated V-chords.

Ex. 24



Tips: You can form an entire 12-bar solo chorus by playing Ex. 21, Ex. 22, and Ex. 24 back-to-back, though you'll need to rest for three-and-a-half beats in bar 8 to make up for the missing measure in Ex. 22.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 23.
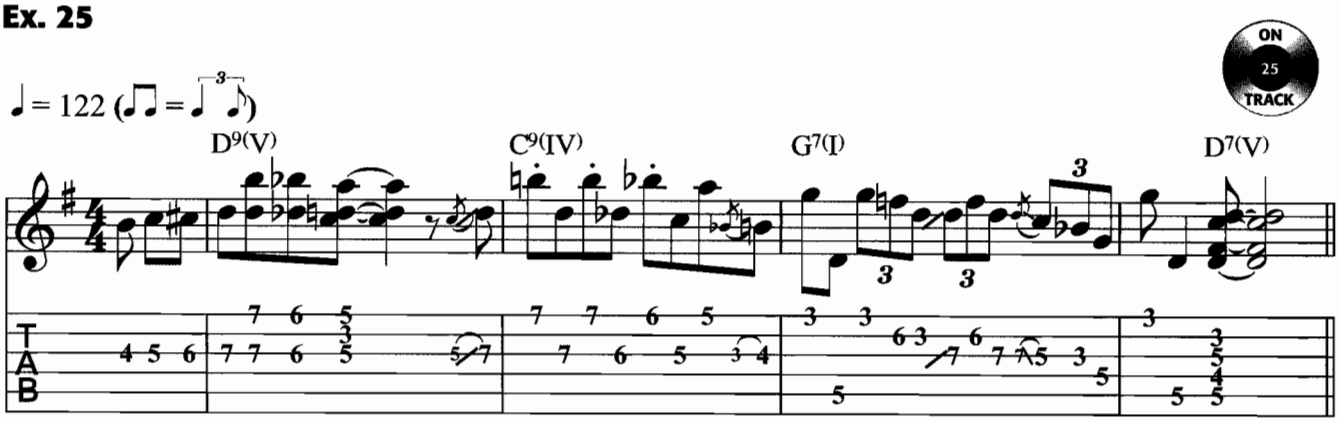
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *G* pentatonic minor/blues and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 25

Our last Gatemouth-style turnaround begins with an ascending chromatic pickup into the root of the V chord, while the harmonic sixth intervals that follow descend chromatically. Note how the last one is fleshed out to form a partial *D7* voicing. In bar 2 we break the same series of sixths into melodic intervals by playing each note separately. Observe the staccato phrasing on beats *one* through *three*, though you should also try letting these notes ring. A familiar ♭3–3 grace hammer on the "and" of beat *four* provides the pickup to the I-chord lick in bar 3, a virtual repeat of the same measure from Ex. 24 with one slight phrasing variation. (Can you spot it?) Similarly, bar 4 paraphrases the same measure in Ex. 24.

Ex. 25



Tips: Try playing the harmonic and melodic sixth intervals in bars 1 and 2 using your pick and middle finger.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 23 and Ex. 24.

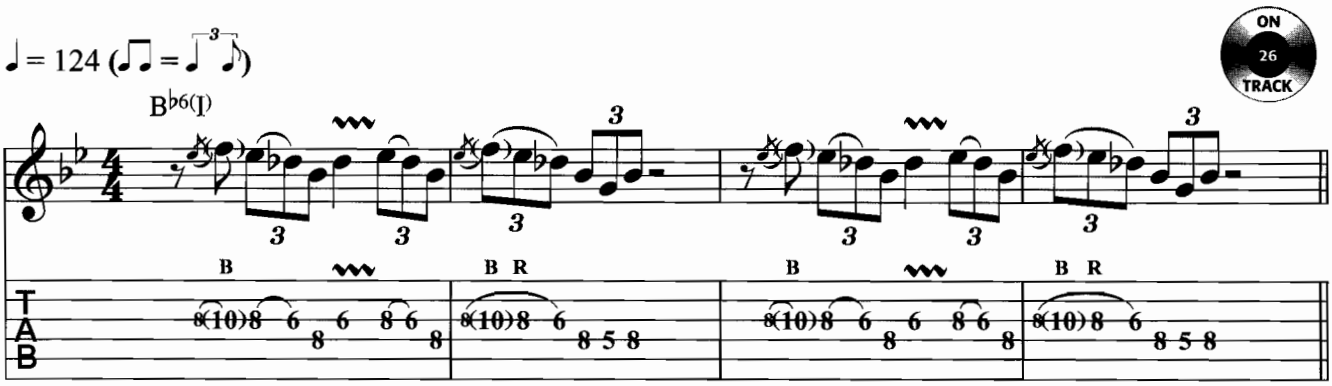
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *G* pentatonic minor/blues and *G* pentatonic major with chromatic passing tones.

Example 26

Our last Gatemouth example is the kind of driving ensemble riff that stands up to chorus after chorus of repetition without becoming tiresome. Though it's shown here over four bars of the I chord, you can play this two-bar phrase starting on any odd-numbered measure in a 12-bar blues progression. Let's examine some of its fine points. Notice how the release of the opening bend is inaudible in bar 1—both the bent and released notes are picked—but audible in bar 2, where only the bend is picked. This also applies to bars 3 and 4. The opening four-note motif begins on the "and" of beat *one* in bars 1 and 3, but is displaced to beat *one* in bars 2 and 4. Once you get in the flow, you can swing this one till the cows come home. Thanks for a job well done, Mr. Brown!

Ex. 26



Tips: Try replacing the *G*'s in the middle of the last triplet in bars 2 and 4 with *A♭*'s. You can ride either version over an entire 12-bar blues progression, but playing the aforementioned *A♭*'s over the I chord and *G*'s on the IV and V chords will lock you into the changes.

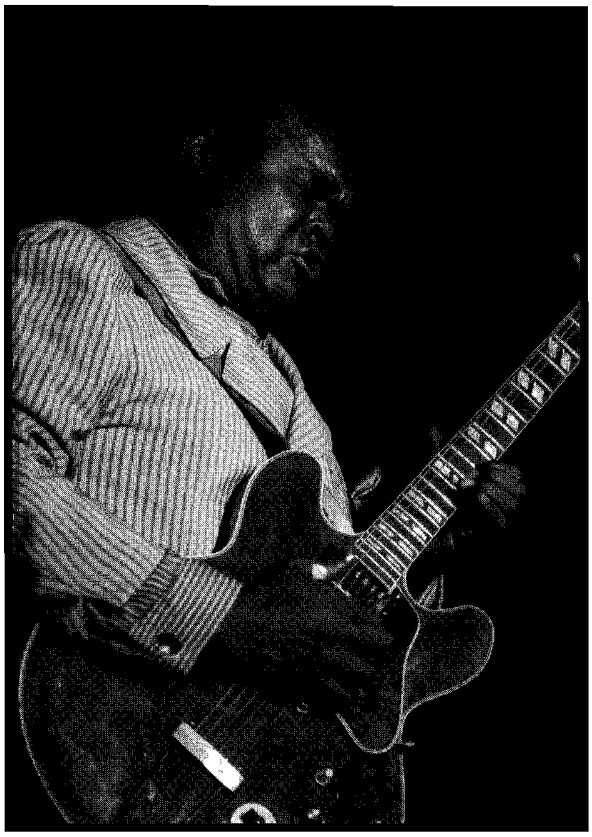
Suggested Accompaniment: Medium-tempo Texas shuffle with walking bass line. Brown employed a similar figure in "Ain't That Just Like a Woman."

Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *B♭* blues progression, or start the two-bar figure on any odd-numbered measure.

Scale Sources: *B♭* pentatonic minor/blues (bars 1 and 3) combined with *B♭* pentatonic major (bars 2 and 4).

Freddie King

(aka The Texas Cannonball)



Profile

Born: Freddie Christian, September 3, 1934, in Gilmer, Texas.
Died December 28, 1976, in Dallas, Texas.

Guitars: Gibson Les Paul goldtop with P-90 pickups, Gibson ES-345, Gibson ES-335, Gibson ES-355. (Note: King used a steel fingerpick on his index finger and a plastic thumbpick.)

Amps: Fender Showman, Fender Quad Reverb, various other Fenders.

Prime Cuts: "Hide Away," "The Stumble," "Have You Ever Loved a Woman," "San-Ho-Zay," "I'm Tore Down," "I Love the Woman," "Going Down."

Recommended Albums: *Let's Hide Away and Dance Away with Freddy King*, King; *Freddy King Sings*, Modern Blues; *Just Pickin'*, Modern Blues; *Hide Away: The Best of Freddy King*, Rhino; *Live at the Electric Ballroom 1974*, Black Top; *Burglar*, BGO.

Video/DVD: *Freddie King: Live at the Sugarbowl, Sept. 22nd, 1972*; *Freddie King in Concert*; *Freddie King: Dallas, Texas, Jan. 20, 1973; Freddie King: The !!!! Beat—1966*; *Texas Blues Guitar*, all on Vestapol.

Influences: Eddie Taylor, Jimmy Rogers, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Little Walter, Robert Lockwood Jr., Otis Rush, Magic Sam.

Influenced: Jimmie Vaughan, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Luther Allison, Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Mick Taylor, Jimi Hendrix, Lonnie Mack, many others.

The Players Say...

"Freddie King taught me about gunslinging. I got all his records on the King/Federal label back when they were new. If you didn't know how to play "Hide Away," you might as well forget it. That was a requirement of *any* gig back then."
— **Jimmie Vaughan** (*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"I play my guitar like [saxophonist] Louis Jordan used to play his horn. That's the same sound I get."
— **Freddie King** (*Guitar Player*, January 1977)

"I had a black, bald-headed manager (who) booked me in all these black clubs in little bitty Texas towns as 'Freddie King, Jr.' I would come out and play all of Freddie King's instrumentals."
— **Jimmie Vaughan**
(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"Freddie was more like the guys out of Memphis. I think B.B. inspired him more than anybody else. You can tell by the licks he plays sometimes, and his singing."
— **Albert Collins**
(*Guitar Player*, May 1988)

"He was the greatest. Everything he played, it sounded like he'd sat down and figured it out beforehand. But actually, that's just the way he played. That's the way you *want* to be; that's what style is all about."
— **Jimmie Vaughan**
(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

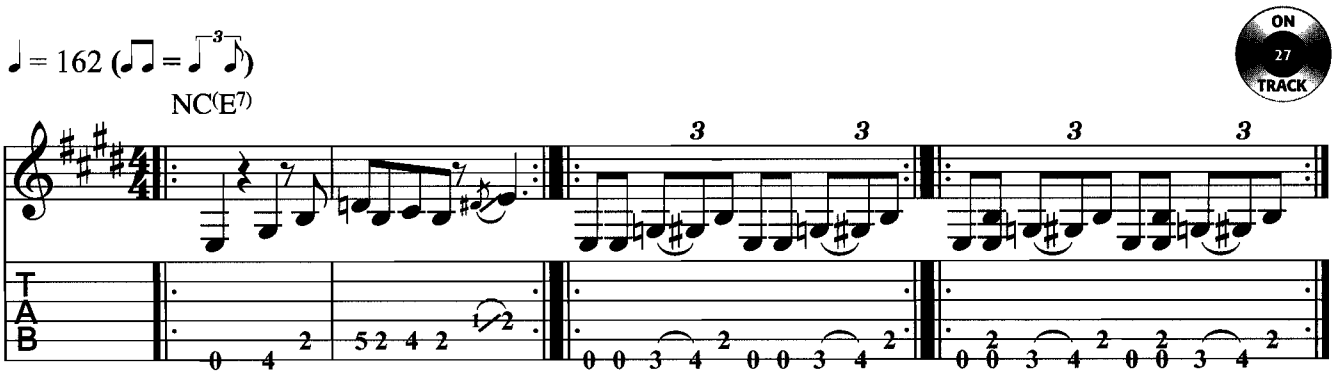
"Freddie could be pretty mean, but subtle with it. He'd make you feel at home, and *then* tear you to pieces."
— **Eric Clapton** (*Guitar Player*, July 1985)

Freddie King–style Licks

Examples 27a–27c

Freddie King favored a more biting sound and a wilder vibrato than his predecessors, so it's time to start inching up the gain factor. You can emulate his razor-edged tone using bridge-position humbuckers or P-90s through an overdriven amp with the treble boosted. Let's begin by laying some groundwork and examining a few adaptations of the type of gritty, rolling bass figures that King immortalized in such classic Texas shuffles as "Hideaway" and "The Stumble." These work well at a wide range of tempos and can be used as accompaniment for most of the next seven examples. In Example 27a, we insert rests between ascending *E* chord tones in bar 1 (note how the first four notes form an *E7* arpeggio), and fill bar 2 with eighth-notes plus a dotted-quarter octave *E* inflected with a half-step grace-note slur. Example 27b features a double low *E* root and hammered ♭3-3-5 (*G-G♯-B*) triplet played twice, while Ex. 27c fattens up the same move with an *E5* chord on the "and" of beats *one* and *three*.

Ex. 27a **Ex. 27b** **Ex. 27c**



Tip: Transpose each of these I-chord figures to the IV and V chords and plug them into a 12-bar blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!

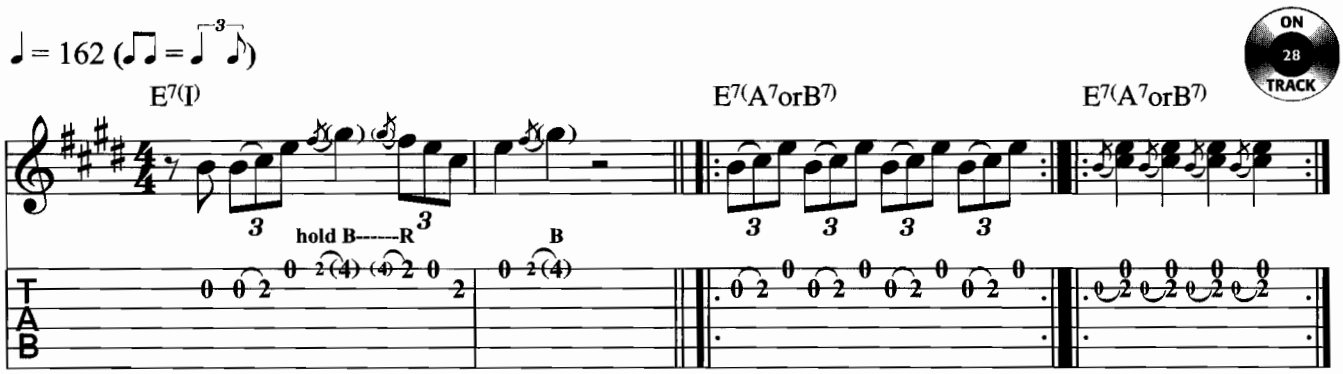
Applications: Play over bars 1–4, 7–8, or 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues combined with *E* pentatonic major.

Examples 28a–28c

The next examples focus on three licks that King was prone to play over the rhythm figures in Ex 27. Similar to the opening of "Hideaway," Example 28a features a hammer-on and held bend with a grace-note release. Example 28b is a stupidly simple but remarkably effective string of hammered 5–6–root triplets. Ex. 28c squashes the same notes into grace-hammered quarter-note double stops.

Ex. 28a **Ex. 28b** **Ex. 28c**



Tip: Reduce both bends in Ex. 28a one half-step to *G* to cover *A7*, the IV chord. (*G* is the ♭7 of *A7*, while *G#* is the 3 of the tonic *E7*.) Try riding Examples 28b and 28c through an entire 12-bar blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Ex. 27b or Ex. 27c.

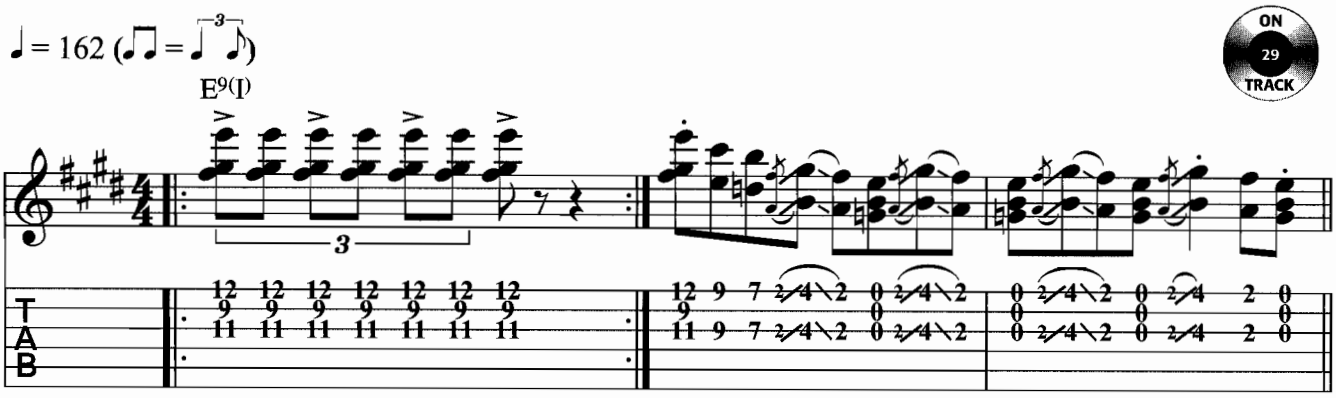
Applications: Play Ex. 28a over bars 2 and 3 of a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression. Play Examples 28b and 28c over any measure in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic major.

Example 29

This example recalls King's classic I-chord breakdown from "Hideaway," popularized by Eric Clapton during his tenure with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. A double-timed quarter-note triplet provides the rhythmic framework for the surprisingly sophisticated *E9* voicing accented throughout bar 1. Repeat this measure and then add the sequence of major-sixth intervals in bars 2 and 3. (Note how the open *B* string gets thrown in with the open sixth intervals.) Many players would opt for harmonic "correctness" by adjusting these parallel sixth intervals to remain diatonic to the key of *E*, but not King; he just plows through with complete abandon and tremendous results.

Ex. 29



Tip: Don't worry about sounding a few additional open *B*'s in bars 2 and 3—sometimes a little slop is just what the doctor ordered!

Suggested Accompaniment: I-chord rhythm section breaks on the downbeats of both repeats of bar 1 only. Follow this figure with the IV chord (*A7*).

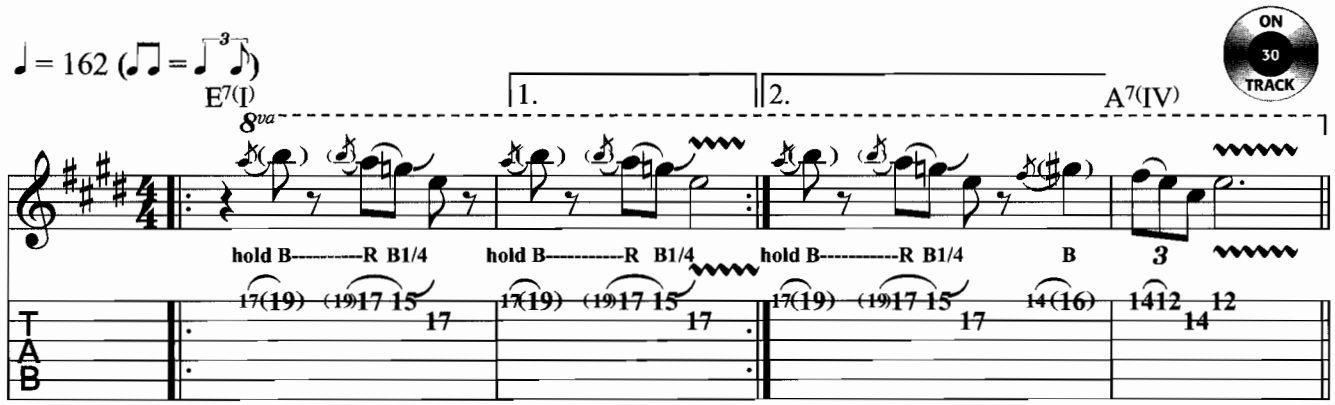
Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Not applicable.

Example 30

Let's look at some of King's stinging upper-register lead work. Example 30 depicts how he might approach the IV chord in a similar uptempo shuffle. We're in the key of *E* and locked into the fifteenth-position extension of the twelfth-position *E* blues box for bar 1 and both endings. Bend the high *A* up a whole-step to *B* and then mute it with your picking hand to "play" the rest on the "and" of beat *two* while still maintaining the bend. On beat *three*, pick the pre-bent *B*, quickly release it back to *A*, and pull off to a slightly bent ♭3 (*G*) one whole-step lower. Top this off with a tonic *E* and you've sussed

Ex. 30



three-quarters of the lick. Check it out: The four-note motif you just learned begins on beat *two* in bar 1. To play both endings, start the same motif on beat *one*. (The first ending elongates the tonic *E* to two full beats.) Bar 4 and its pickup shift to a fourteenth-position *E* pentatonic major run to coincide with the IV chord.

Tip: Try transposing this lick down one octave for a more harmonica-like timbre. You can adjust the amount of attitude in the lick by reducing all the bent *B*'s one half-step to *B♭*, the ♭5.

Suggested Accompaniment: Examples 27a and 27b applied to the I and IV chords.
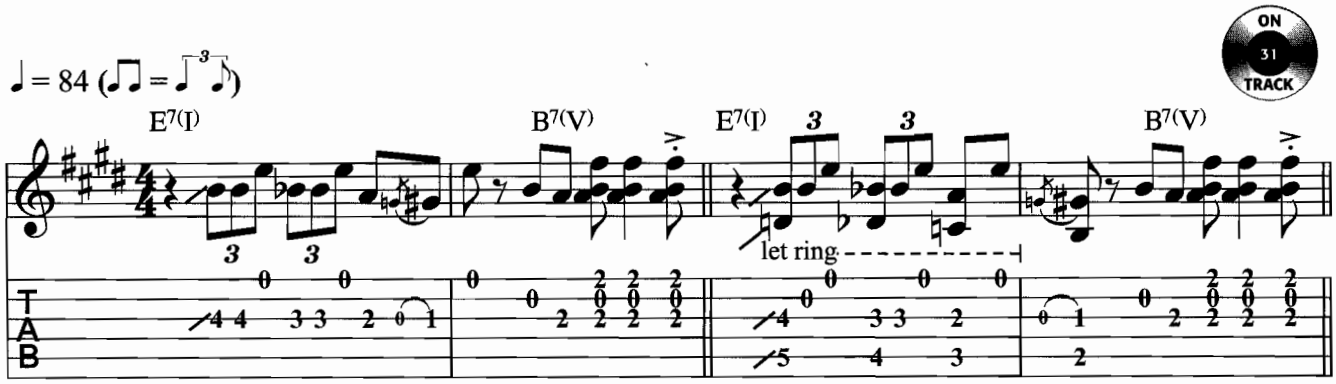
Applications: Play over bars 1–5 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues (bars 13) and *E* pentatonic major (bars 3 and 4).

Examples 31a–31b

These examples dissect a pair of King-style I–V turnarounds. Example 31a begins on beat *two* and alternates double hits on a descending chromatic line played on the *G* string (5–♭5, or *B–B♭*) with open *E* pedal-tones. You can create a fuller sound by letting the notes in each triplet ring, though the lick was not originally conceived this way. On beat *four*, we continue the chromatic descent with a pair of eighth-notes (*A*, the 4, and a hammered ♭3–3, or *G–G#*) followed by the open-*E* root, a motif that has been embraced by players from Clapton to SRV for decades. The remainder of the turnaround is composed of *B7* chord tones and voicings. Example 31b adds parallel major-sixth harmonies below the 5, ♭5, and 4 on beats *two*, *three*, and *four*. (This is the same as playing parallel minor-third intervals an octave lower.) In this case, you want the notes to ring as indicated. The *G#* in the hammered ♭3–3 move from Ex. 31a is also harmonized, but not until the downbeat of bar 2. The last three beats in both examples are identical.

Ex. 31a, 31b



Tip: Try playing both examples using hybrid picking. In Ex. 31b, try combining the notes in each beat of bar 1 into a chord shape and playing them on the first and last eighth-notes of each triplet.

Suggested Accompaniment: None necessary, but either Ex. 27a or Ex. 27b will work.

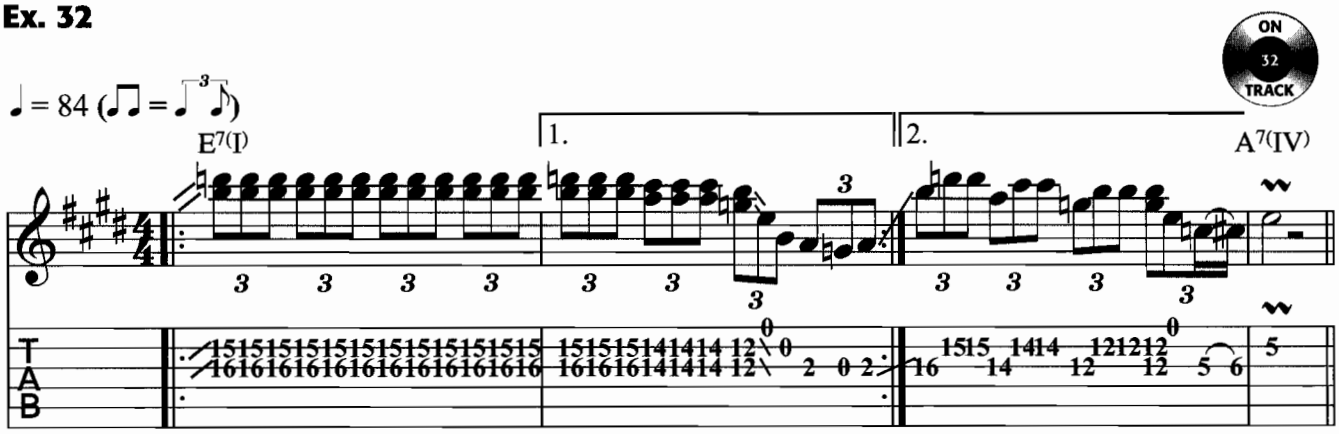
Applications: Play over bars 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues combined with *E* pentatonic major and *B7* chord tones.

Example 32

Abrupt shifts in register emphasize the call-and-response phrasing throughout the I–IV lick in Ex. 32. We begin by sliding into fifteenth position for five beats of eighth-note triplets utilizing minor-third intervals built from the 5 (*B*) and ♭7 (*D*). Fret these with your first and second fingers. The double-stop major-third intervals on beats *two* and *three* in bar 2 contain the 4 and 6 (*A* and *C♯*) and ♭3 and 5 (*G* and *B*), respectively. Barre these with your first finger. (Internalize these three intervals—you'll be seeing them again shortly.) Halfway through the first ending, we slide from the twelfth-fret double-stop into open position. Use the open *E* and *B* strings in the middle of beat *three* to buy enough time to target the third-string/second-fret *A* with your second (middle) finger before you hop the bus back to fifteenth position for the repeat. The same three intervals are broken into arpeggiated triplets in the second ending—another move adopted by a young Eric Clapton. Halfway through beat *four*, a strategically placed open *E* facilitates the shift into fifth position to hammer the ♭3–3 of the IV chord, whose 5 (*E*) provides our final target.

Ex. 32



Tip: Use downstrokes except for the open *E* and *B* strings.

Suggested Accompaniment: Ex. 27b or Ex. 27c.

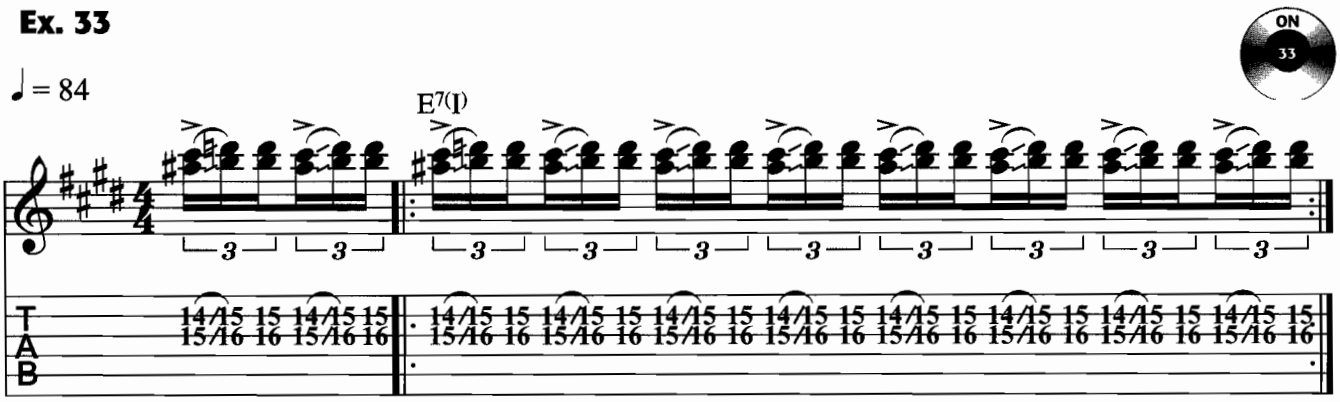
Applications: Play over bars 1–5 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues with added 6 (*C♯*) and ♭6 (*C*).

Example 33

The hardest part of the kinetic lick in Ex. 33 is not letting it get away from you. Redolent of the fury King is capable of unleashing at slower tempos, we're using a chromatic slide to approach every other stacked 5–♭7 interval in this non-stop string of 16th-note triplets. Strive to maintain its momentum without accelerating. The most natural choice of picking seems to be alternating down- and upstrokes. Play it right and you'll feel the time transfer between your picking and fretting hands due to the unpicked slide in the middle of each triplet.

Ex. 33



Tip: Try riding this lick over an entire 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *E* blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Ex. 27b or Ex. 27c played at slower tempo.

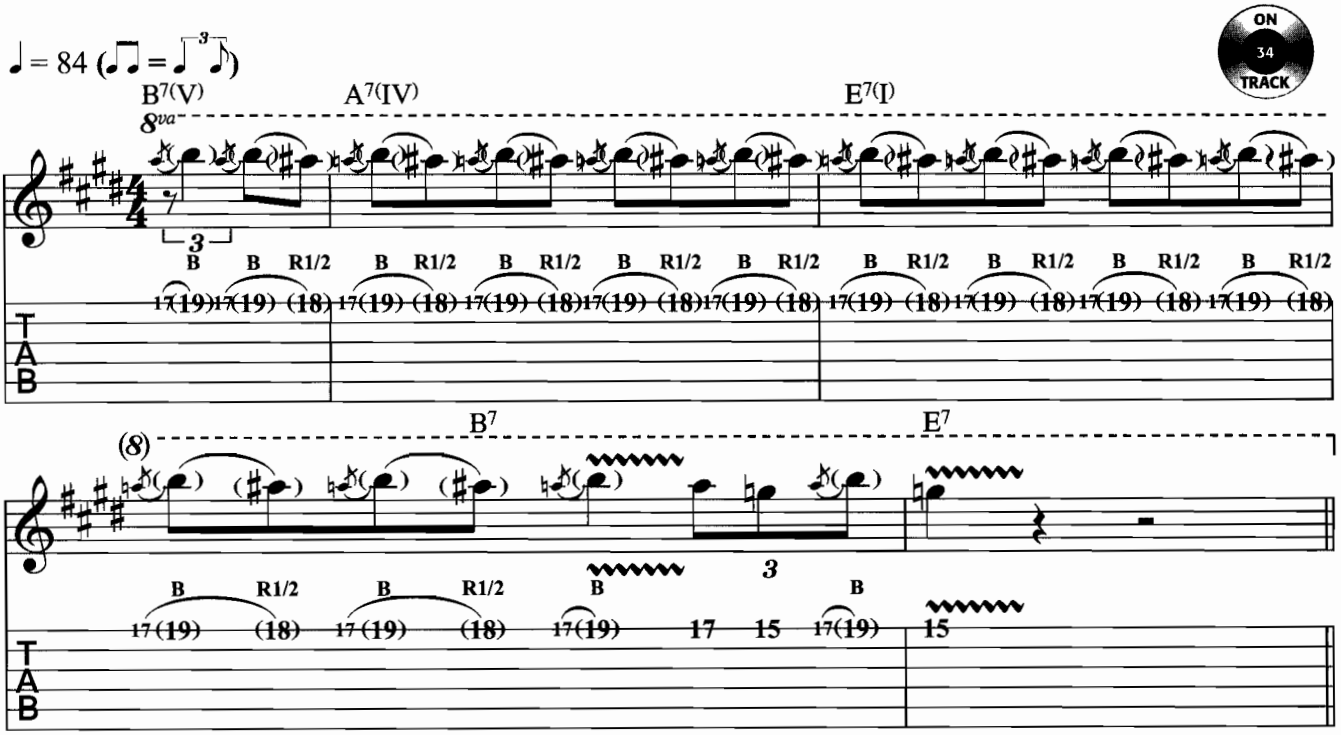
Applications: Play into and over bars 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, or 12 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues with chromatic passing tones.

Example 34

This turnaround in Ex. 34 emulates four bars of wild, upper-register King-style string bends. We enter halfway through the V-chord change in the middle of an eighth-note triplet on beat *three*, and by beat *four* we're playing the whole-step-bend to half-step-release motif that fills the next two-and-a-half bars. The quivering quarter-note bend on beat *three* of bar 4 sets up a final triplet and loud-and-proud ♭3/♯9 (*G*) on the downbeat of the following chorus—a reminder that there have always been *three* Kings!

Ex. 34



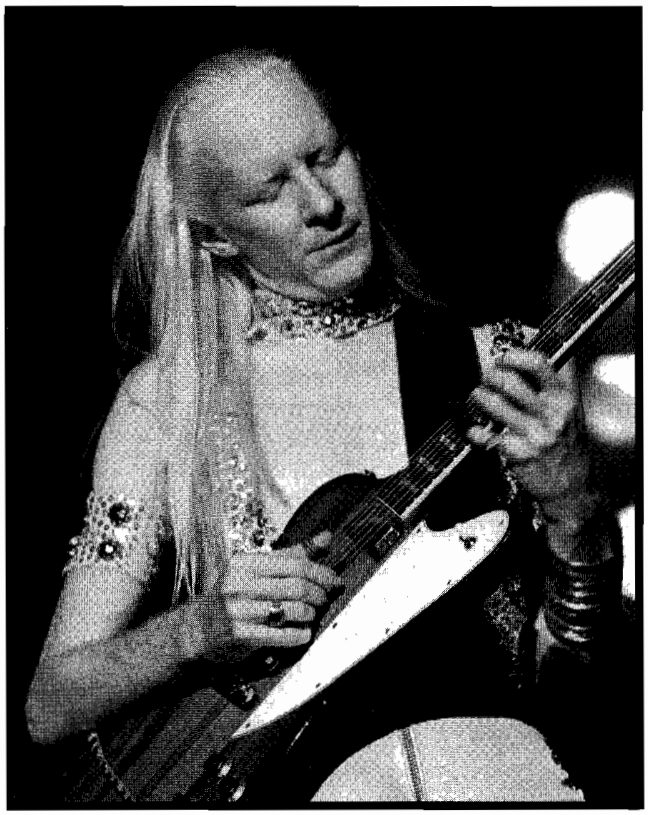
Tip: Hone in on the sound of the half-step releases and equate this with the amount of fret-hand pressure you need to release in order to achieve them. Practice this regularly and it will eventually become a reflex action.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 27b transposed to V and IV chords and played at slower tempo.

Applications: Play over the V (pickup)–IV–I–V turnaround (bars 9–12) into bar 1 of the following chorus in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* blues/pentatonic minor.

Johnny Winter



Profile

Born: John Dawson Winter III, Feb. 23, 1944, in Beaumont, Texas.

Guitars: Gibson ES-125, white Fender Stratocaster, white Gibson Les Paul/SG custom, 1966 Fender Mustang, Gibson Les Paul goldtop with P-90 pickups, three circa-1959 Gibson Firebirds, Epiphone solidbody, Erlewine Lazer guitars. (Note: Winter uses a plastic Gibson thumbpick.)

Amps: Tweed Fender Bassman 4x10, Fender Super Reverb, Fender Twin Reverb, 100-watt Marshalls with two Ampeg SVT 8x10 speaker cabinets, Ampeg V-4, MusicMan HD410.

Effects: MXR Phase Shifter, MXR Chorus.

Prime Cuts: "I'm Yours and I'm Hers," "Be Careful with a Fool," "Leland Mississippi Blues," "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl," "Memory Pain," "I Hate Everybody," "Hustled Down in Texas," "Miss Ann," "Highway 61 Revisited," "Guess I'll Go Away," "Funky Music," "Jumpin' Jack Flash," "Johnny B. Goode," "Mean Town Blues."

Recommended Albums: *The Progressive Blues Experiment,* EMI; *Johnny Winter, Second Winter, Johnny Winter And, Johnny Winter And–Live, Still Alive and Well, John Dawson Winter III, Saints & Sinners, Nothing but the Blues,* all on Sony/Columbia/Legacy; *Together–Live* (with Edgar Winter); *White Hot & Blue, Third Degree,* all on Blue Sky; *Guitar Slinger,* Alligator; *Let Me In,* Pointblank; *I'm a Bluesman,* Virgin; with Muddy Waters: *Hard Again, I'm Ready, Muddy "Mississippi" Waters Live, King Bee,* all on Epic/Legacy.

Video/DVD: *Pieces and Bits, Live in Times Square 2003,* both on Music Video Dist.

Influences: Seymour Drugan, Luther Nallie, Chet Atkins, Merle Travis, T-Bone Walker, Lightnin' Hopkins, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Albert King, Lightnin' Slim, John Lee Hooker, Elmore James, Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, Leadbelly, Robert Johnson, Son House, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton.

Influenced: Edgar Winter, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Billy Gibbons, Rick Derringer, Eric Johnson, Joe Satriani, Muddy Waters, and countless others.

The Players Say...

"Daddy said, 'The only two big ukulele guys I can think of are Ukulele Ike and Arthur Godfrey. You don't really have too much of a chance playing ukulele. You'd better try guitar.'"

– **Johnny Winter**

(*Guitar Player*, August 1974)

"Johnny had me scratching my head a lot of times because he would soak up anything I taught him immediately, and I would have to think up something else real quick to show him. He was a very normal boy, very polite, and extremely talented. It was always a pleasure when it was time for Johnny's lesson or if he just happened to come by to visit."

– **Luther Nallie**, Johnny Winter's guitar teacher

(*Vintage Guitar*, November 2001)

"I would just learn how to play a record note-for-note. After I kind of got the feel of what was supposed to be going on, I just took what I heard and assimilated it, and I guess it would come out part mine and part everybody else's."

– **Johnny Winter**

(*Guitar Player*, August 1974)

"This is the baddest motherfucker, man!"

– **Michael Bloomfield**'s onstage introduction of Winter at the Fillmore East during a concert with Al Kooper on Winter's first day in New York City, December 13, 1968

"We lived beside each other and had a rehearsal studio that was just ours, so we could rehearse every day. We played all of the songs on the first Johnny Winter AND every day before we recorded them, so that when we got in the studio, it was totally easy, as we knew exactly what we wanted to do."

– **Rick Derringer**

(*Vintage Guitar*, November 2001)

"That's my son."

– **Muddy Waters**

(*Guitar Player* interview with Waters and Winters, August 1993)

"I guess it goes in a circle. You learn from people, and then, if you do it long enough and do it right, people start learning stuff from you. (But) I don't like it that I'm getting this old! So many of my friends, the people I learned from, aren't here now. I like having the older guys to look up to. I'd rather be a student than a teacher!"

—Johnny Winter

(*Guitar Player*, March 1994)

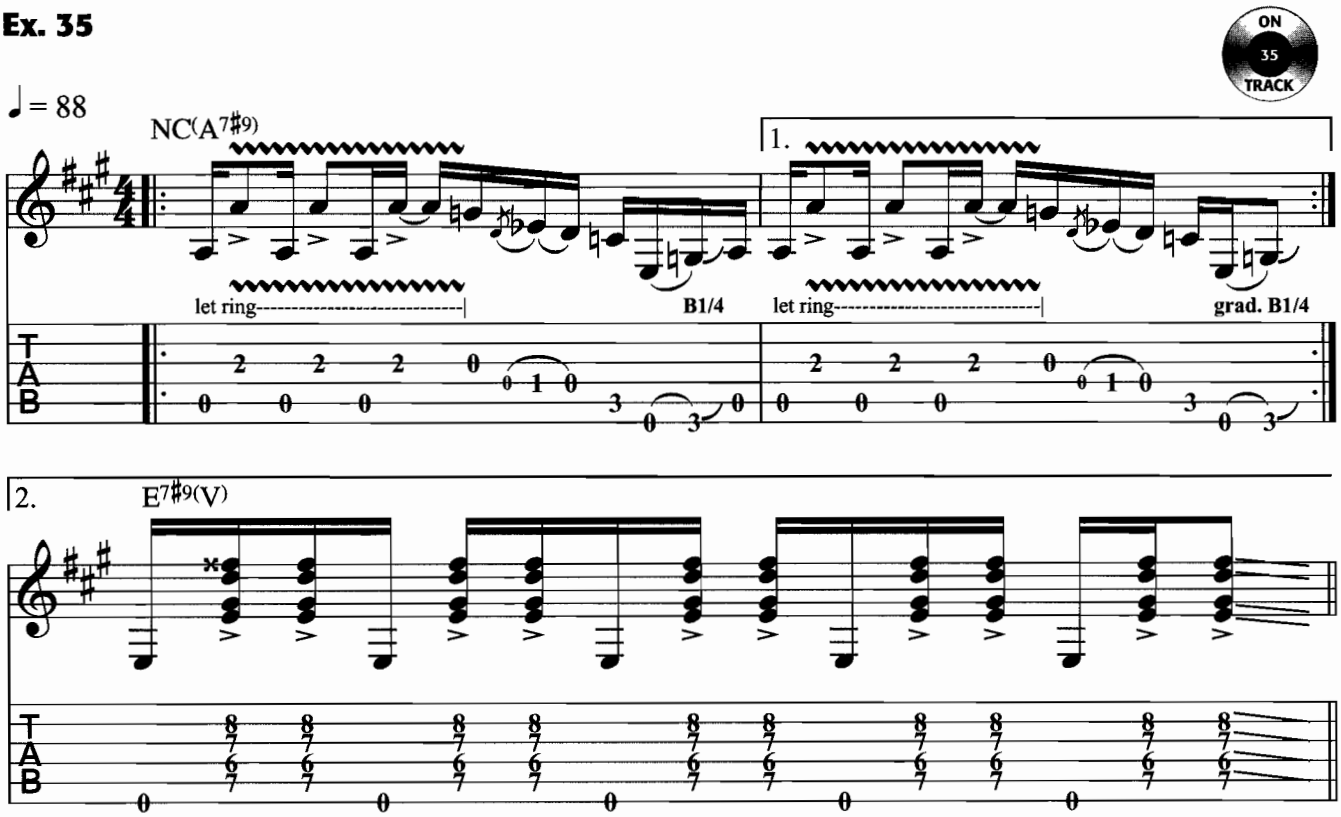
Johnny Winter–style Licks

I've got to admit that of all the stellar players profiled in this book, Johnny Winter is my main man! Though many of his more accessible licks have since become stock blues-rock fare, when Winter emerged on the scene in the late '60s he sounded like no one else. I was there, and he rocked my 13-year-old world every bit as much as Clapton, Beck, Page, or Hendrix.

Example 35

Break out the humbuckers (full-sized or mini), crank up the midrange and treble, and dial in some sweet, natural overdrive, because Johnny Winter is our most gainful player thus far, though his sound is relatively clean in comparison to the oversaturated tones favored by most of the current generation of blues-rockers. Early in his career, Winter dished up swampy Delta grooves like the one in Ex. 35. This is one of those deceptive "where's *one*?" intros due to its strongly accented second 16th-note

Ex. 35



beat—it's easy to think you're hearing a 16th-note pickup into a downbeat. The main riff shuttles between octave *A*'s—decorated by his signature vibrato, more pronounced than any heard thus far—three times before descending the *A* blues scale. (Can you spot the 3/16 hemiola during the first three beats?) We complete the measure with a hammered and quarter-bent 5–♭7–root pickup into bar 2. Except for a subtle but important variation on beat *four*, both measures are identical. Following a repeat of bar 1, we alternate the low open *E* with a pair of *E7#9* V chords to create another 3/16 hemiola.

Tip: Isolate and memorize the tricky rhythms in this lick before applying the notes. Note how the 16th beats are divided into four groups of three followed by a group of four. Maintain a steady vibrato as you accent the three upper-octave *A*'s.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! The rhythm section doubles the guitar figure. Listen to "I'm Yours and I'm Hers."

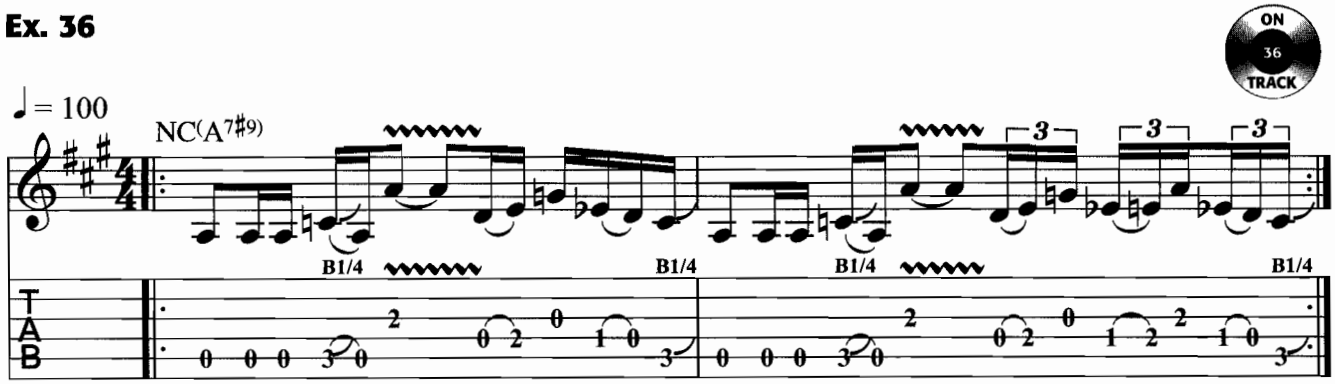
Applications: Stand-alone ensemble intro.

Scale Sources: *A* blues (bars 1 and 2).

Example 36

Representative of Winter's '70s rock stylings, Ex. 36 depicts a howling two-bar I-chord riff in the key of *A*. The first two beats in both measures are identical and the variations that occur on beats *three* and *four* create a nice example of call-and-response phrasing. The hammered 4–5 (*D–E*) on the "and" of beat *three* in bar 1 serves as a pickup to the run on beat *four*. Here, we descend the *A* blues scale from its 7 (*G*), skipping over the 5 on our way back to the root. Bar 2 fills the last beat-and-a-half with three zippy 16th-note triplets. The first and last of these utilize the same six notes from the fill in the previous measure, while the triplet in the middle introduces a hammered ♭5–5–root motif (*Eb–E–A*). Play the *E♭* with your first finger and then hammer the *E* and barre the *A* on the *G* string with your second finger. In fact, you can play the entire lick using these two fingers. The lineage of the low-register runs in both Ex. 35 and Ex. 36 can be traced directly back to Lightnin' Hopkins, who was one of Winter's main influences.

Ex. 36



Tip: Isolate and drill the 16th-note triplets in bar 2. Try playing them an octave higher.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! Listen to "Rock Me Baby."

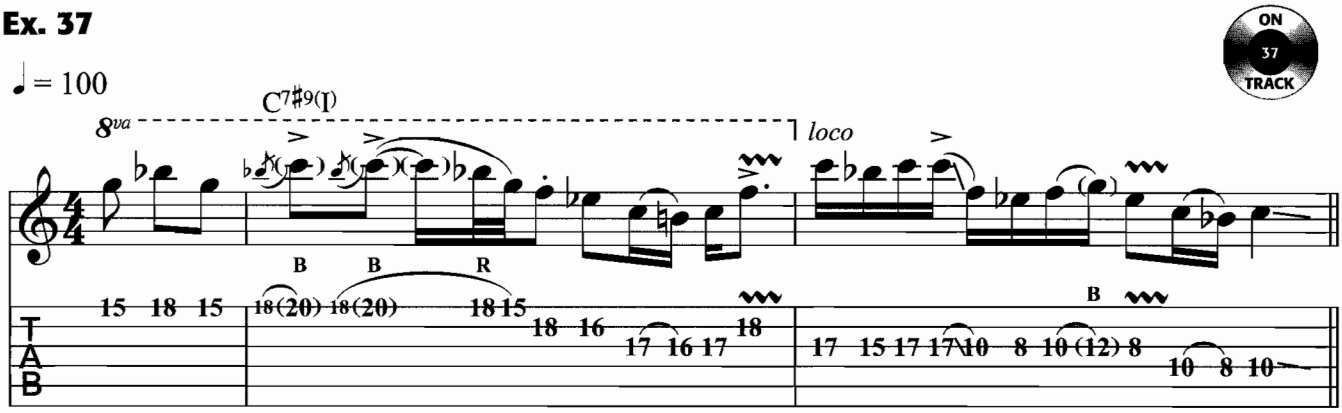
Applications: I-chord intro to 12-bar slow-change *A* blues-rock progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Example 37

The upper-register lick in Ex. 37 typifies Winter's high-octane approach to soloing. Playing over a funky, medium-tempo groove, we begin in fifteenth position with a 5–♭7–5 (*G–B♭–G*) pickup into a pair of bent tonic *C*'s on beat *one* of bar 1. The second bend gets a speedy 32nd-note release to the ♭7 and pull-off to the 5 followed by a staccato 4 (*C*) on the "and" of beat *two*. Play the b3 (*E♭*) on beat *three*, sandwich a tasty passing 7 (*B*) between a pair of *C*'s, and top it all off with an accented *F*. You'll find that the rhythms in bar 2 are more straightforward. As soon as you hit the last 17th-fret *C* in beat *one*, quickly slide your third finger down to the tenth fret without breaking contact with the *G* string. This locks you into the eighth-position *C* blues box to complete the lick.

Ex. 37



Tip: Isolate and memorize the tricky rhythms in this lick before applying the notes. Once you've got it down, you can also play the lick over the IV or V chords.

Suggested Accompaniment: Funky *C7#9* I-chord vamp with rhythm section. Listen to "Memory Pain."
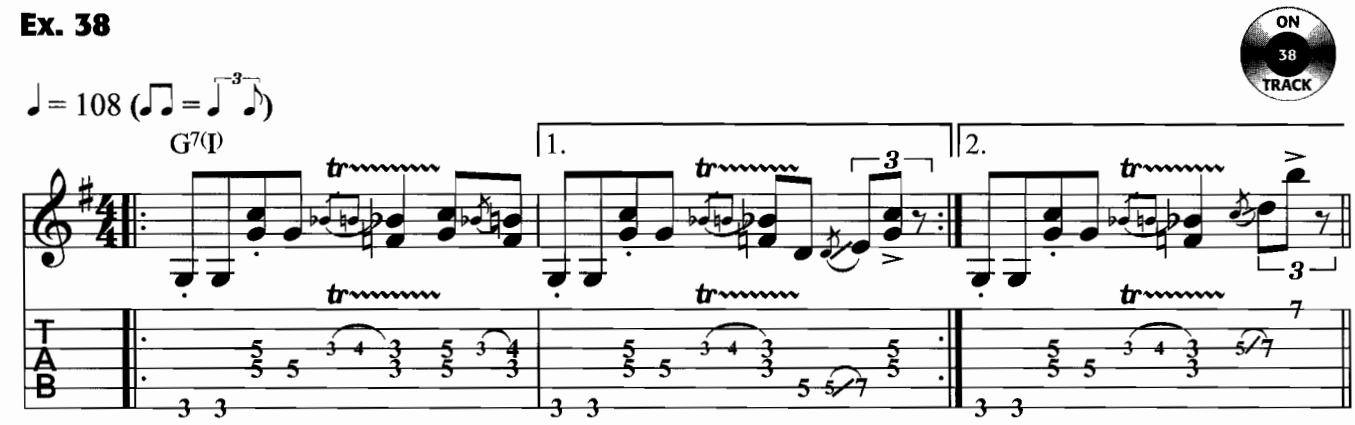
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–2, 3–4, 7–8, or 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *C* blues-rock progression. Also works well into and over bars 5–6 and 9–10, that is, beginning with a pick-up into any odd-numbered measure in a 12-bar blues progression.

Scale Sources: *C* pentatonic minor/blues with added 7 (*B*) passing tone.

Example 38

A lot of Winter's early playing displayed a great affinity for Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown's guitar style. Example 38 shows the type of swinging, medium-tempo shuffle figure Winter would adorn with tasty blues and jazz licks. Begin by fretting the low *G*'s in bar 1 with your thumb or index finger—your choice. Next, grab the 5th-fret double-stop on beat *two* by barring your third finger across the *D* and *G* strings, repeat its lower note, barre the third fret with your first finger, and trill the ♭3 (*B*♭) to the 3 (*B*) at the fourth fret using your second finger. Finish the measure by repeating the 5th- and 3rd-fret double-stops, decorating the latter with a grace-hammered 3. The only variation in this rhythm figure occurs during the last half of the first and second endings. In the first, the 5th-fret *C5* double-stop is preceded by a slide into its 3 (*E*), while the second sneaks in a broken major-sixth interval.

Ex. 38



Tip: Cover the IV and V chords by transposing bar 1 to the eighth fret for *C7* and the tenth fret for *D7*.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium shuffle. You're playing it! Listen to "Miss Ann."

Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *G* blues progression.

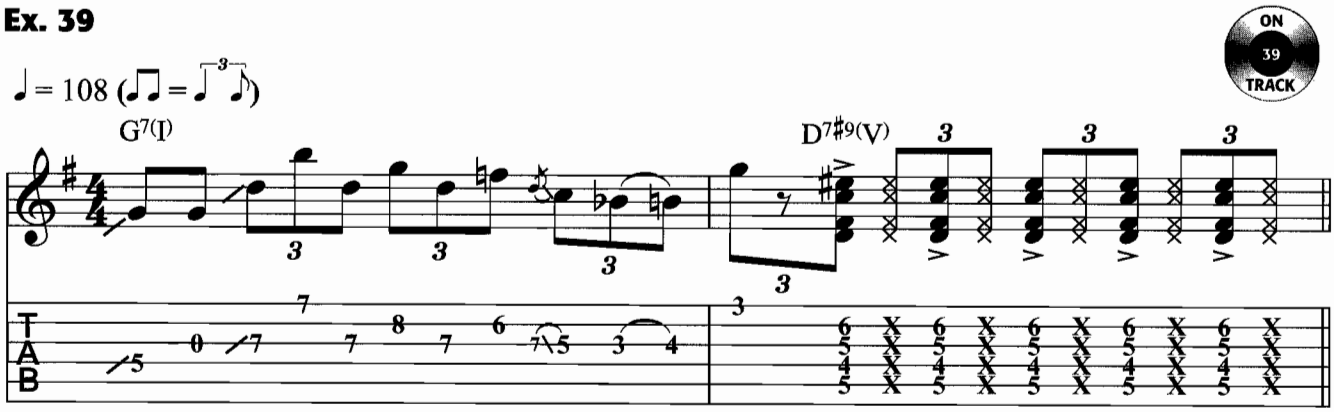
Scale Sources: Not applicable.

Example 39

The I–V turnaround in Ex. 39 pairs well with the rhythm figure in Ex. 38. Every note in the first three beats of bar 1 is a *G7* chord tone. Play the opening unison *G*'s (once again, an open string buys time to shift positions) and slide into the broken major-sixth interval at the seventh fret with your second finger. This 5 (*D*) becomes a pedal-tone that alternates between the 3, root, and ♭7 (*B*, *G*, and *F*) for the next two beats. Treat the grace-note slur to the 4 (*C*), hammered ♭3–3 (*B*♭–*B*) and octave *G* root on the downbeat of bar 2 as a single, Lightnin'-style motif.

The V chord in bar 2 gets a reverse two-against-three hemiola treatment. Start the accented *D7#9* voicings on the last eighth-note of the triplet in beat *one* and then mute every other eighth-note in the measure by momentarily loosening your grip on the chord shape without breaking contact with the strings. Alternate down- and upstrokes beginning on the first *D7#9* chord.

Ex. 39



Tip: Between Ex. 38 and Ex. 39, you have all the necessary tools to construct a full 12-bar rhythm figure.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium shuffle. You're playing it!

Applications: Play over bars 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G7* arpeggio and combined *G* pentatonic minor and *G* pentatonic major.
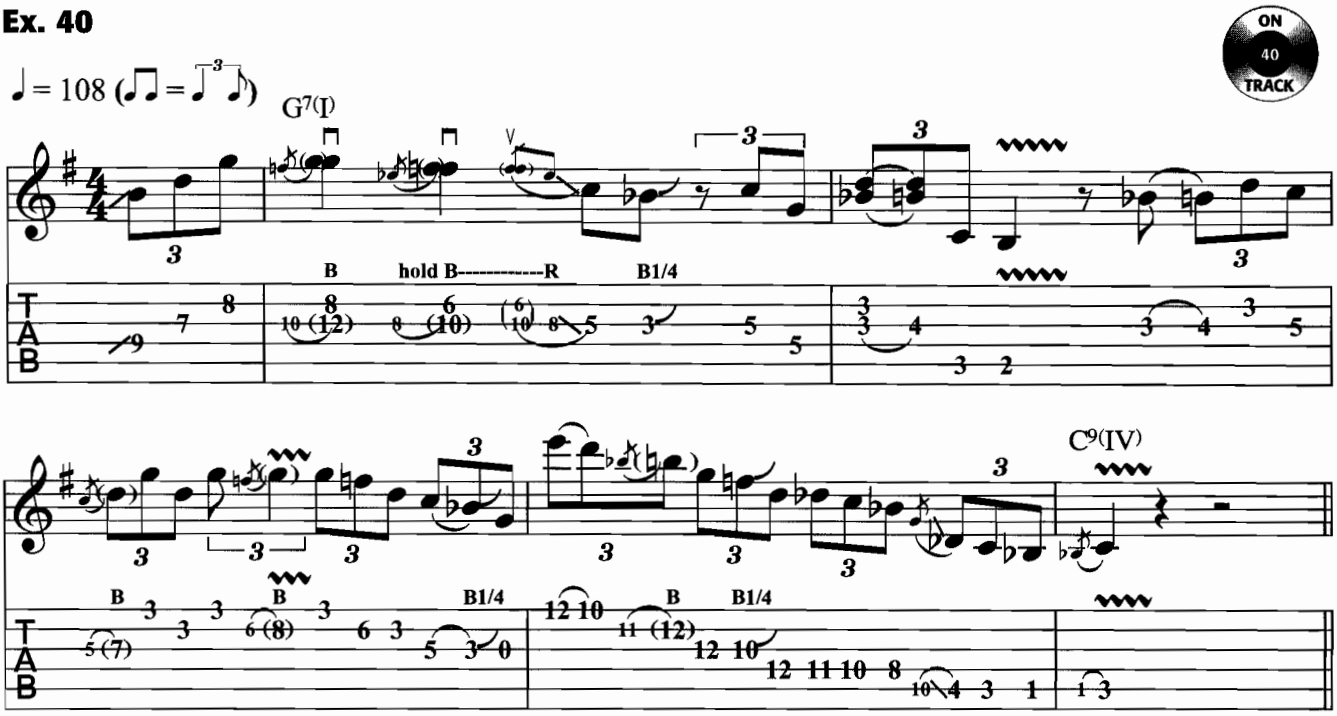
Example 40

Now that we've established a rhythm figure, let's lay some swinging licks on top of it. Example 40 covers the I–IV change beginning with a first-inversion *G*-triad pickup into a pair of oblique unison quarter-note bends to the root and ♭7. The next move is a J. Winter trademark. Hold the previous oblique ♭7 bend until the start of beat *three*, and then drag your pick over both strings using an upstroke as you simultaneously release the bend and slur down to the 4 (*C*) before choking the ♭3 (*B*♭). This signature grace-note release-and-slur maneuver takes place within a single beat. Rest on beat *four*, and then complete the triplet and hammer the 3 into the 3rd-fret double-stop on the downbeat of bar 2. The first phrase comes to rest with a 4–3 (*C–B*) suspension and resolution that totally locks in with the I chord.

The second phrase shows how Winter hot-rodded his Texas, Chicago, and Delta blues influences into a unique style. The placement of bends within the rhythmic motif in the first half of bar 3 is a textbook move. And few other guitarists could make a simple descending *G* pentatonic minor scale sound as cool as it does on beats *three* and *four*. (Once again, a strategically placed open *G* buys precious nanoseconds for the jump to tenth position.)

The final phrase begins with a spicy 6–5 (*E–D*) pull-off made even more piquant by the ♭3–3 bend that follows it. Target the opening 12th-fret *E* with your third finger and the rest of the phrase will fall into place. Beat *two* continues the descent with a root–♭7–5 motif. These first two triplets form an easy-to-remember symmetrical "X" shape across the top three strings. The last two triplets feature identical ♭5–4–♭3 (*D*♭*–C–B*♭) motifs played in two different octaves with a six-fret grace-note slur into the lower one. The final hammered *C* coincides with the arrival of the IV chord.

Ex. 40



Tip: Sight down the 10th-to-4th-fret grace-note slide in bar 4 well in advance.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium shuffle à la Ex. 38 adapted to I–IV progression.

Applications: Play into and over bars 1–5 in a 12-bar slow-change *G* blues progression.

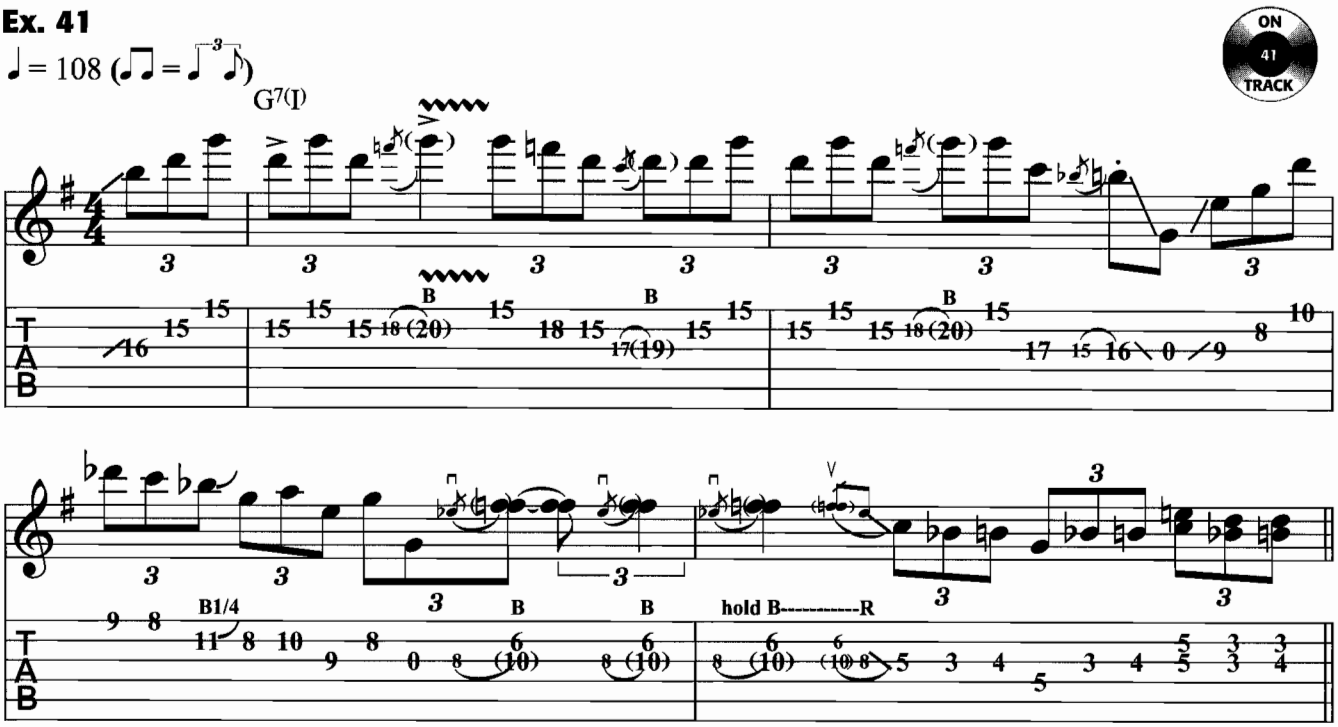
Scale Sources: Combined *G* pentatonic minor/blues and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 41

Spanning most of the fingerboard, Ex. 41 can be divided into two two-bar phrases played in four different positions. We begin with the same first-inversion *G* arpeggio as Ex. 40, played one octave higher on the top three strings. Fret this three-note shape as you would a partial first-position *F* chord and slide into it from an undetermined fret, leading with your second finger. This locks you into the fifteenth-position *G* blues box for the first phrase, a call-and-response lick that encompasses the bulk of bars 1 and 2. An open *G* on the "and" of beat *three* in bar 2 provides the opportunity to slide back into eighth position (again, leading with your second finger) for the pickup into bar 3. Let's divide this second phrase into two parts. The first three beats in bar 3 exploit a combination of *G* pentatonic major and *G* blues Winter-isms common to this position. The next shift occurs in the middle of beat *three* via, you guessed it, another open *G*. The following three beats—which contain a trio of oblique unison bends to the ♭7 (*F*) and a reverse-raked grace-note release and slide into third position—are very similar to the moves we played in bar 1 of Ex. 40, albeit with a different rhythm. Arriving in third position, we complete the triplet on beat *two* of bar 4 with a now familiar 4–♭3–3 (*C*–*B*♭–*B*) motif. The last

two beats paraphrase this move using double-stops to form a cool little lick that could easily stand on its own in a wide variety of settings.

Ex. 41



Tip: Sight down each position shift well in advance.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium shuffle à la Ex. 38.
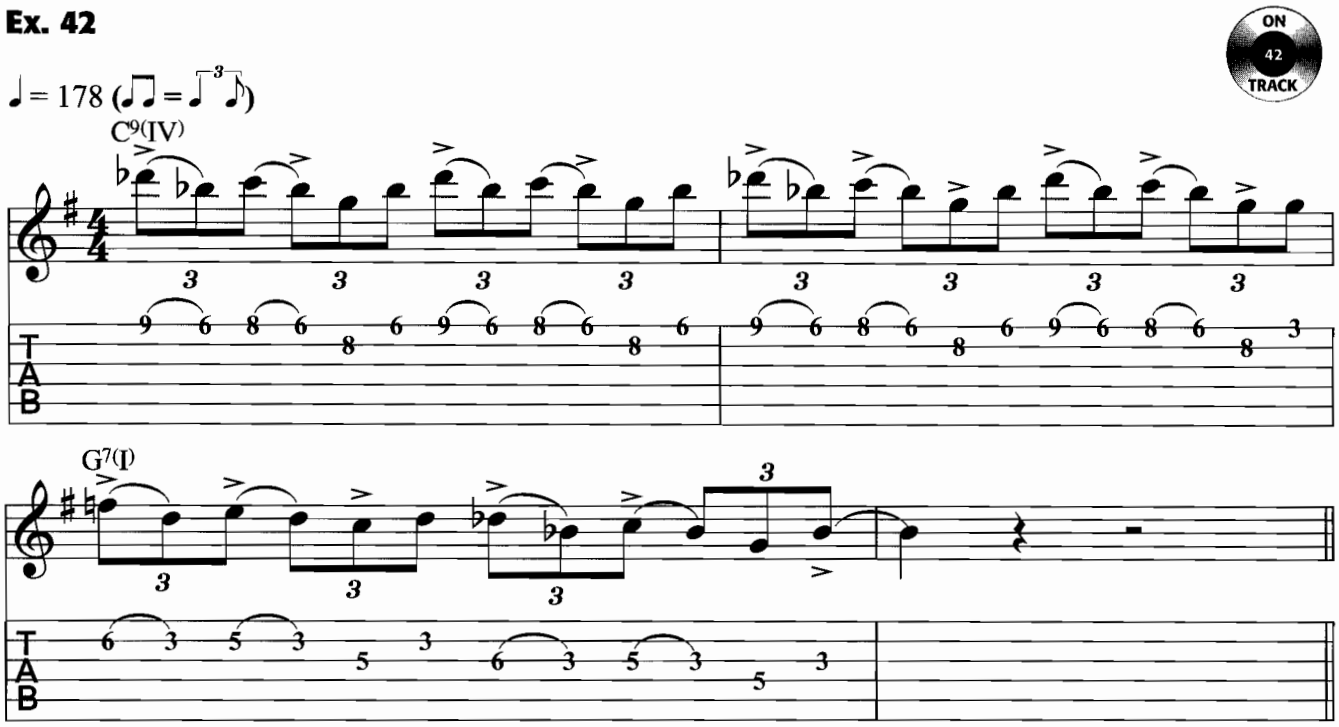
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar slow-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *G* pentatonic major and *G* blues/pentatonic minor.

Example 42

Let's jack up the tempo to a spritely 178 beats per minute. Example 42 features identically shaped six-note motifs played across the top three strings over a IV–I change. Note how the sixth-position triplets in bar 1 are accented in "threes," while those in bar 2, as well as the third-position triplets in bar 3, are accented in "twos"—very cool. The *G*-blues-based ♭5–♭3–4–♭3–root–♭3 (*D♭–B♭–C–B♭–G–B♭*) motif in bars 1 and 2 translates to ♭9–♭7–root–♭7–5–♭7 of *C9*, the IV chord. Drop three frets to the third position by playing the last note in bar 2 with your first finger. (No open-string helper here, so you'll have to be quick on the draw.) Halfway through bar 3, the motif jumps from the second and third strings to the adjacent third and fourth strings. The first two beats outline a ♭7–5–6–5–4–5 (*F–D–E–D–C–D*) motif over the I chord, while beats *three* and *four* restate the previous IV-chord motif one octave lower. The pull-offs allow you to fly through these triplets with a minimum of picking action.

Ex. 42



Tip: Isolating and drilling each six-note motif will strengthen your ability to switch between accented groupings of threes and twos at will.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast swing-eighth shuffle. Play staccato dotted-quarter-note to eighth-note IV- and I-chord hits on beat *one* and the "and" of beat *two* in each measure of a 12-bar quick-change blues progression. Try hammering from the ♭3 to the 3 in each I chord. Listen to "I Hate Everybody."

Applications: Play over bars 5–8 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression.

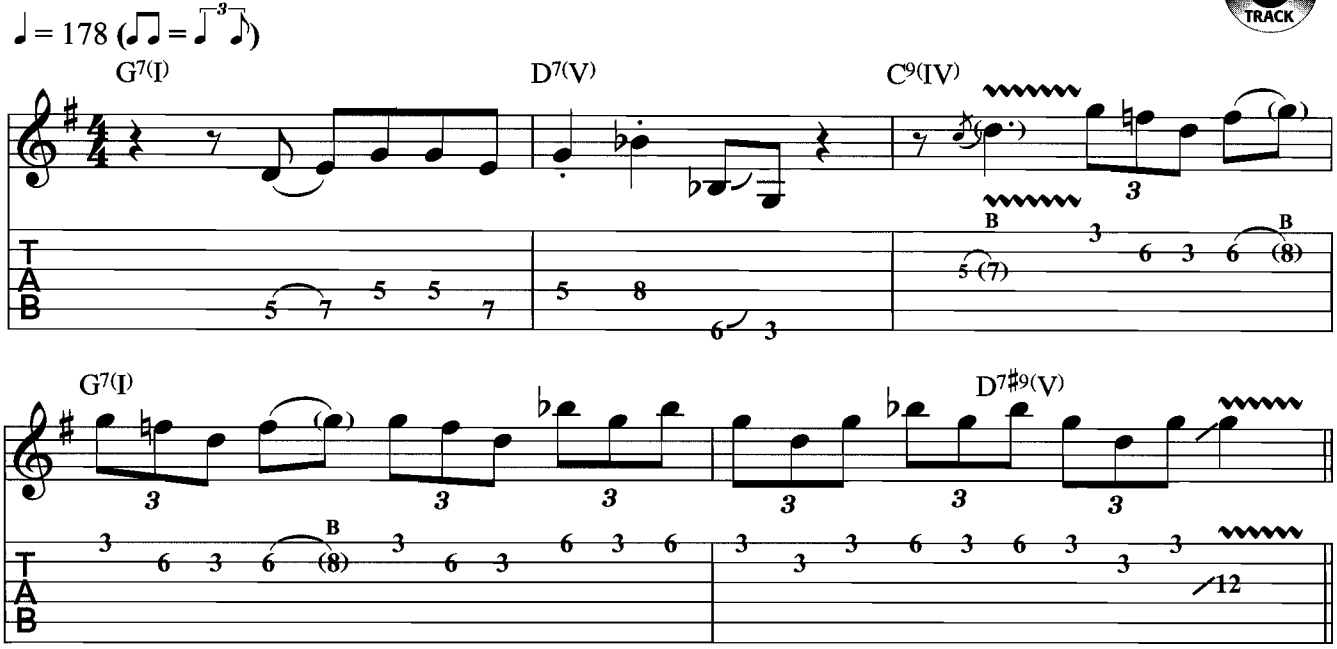
Scale Sources: Combined *G* blues/pentatonic minor and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 43

Try attaching this V–IV–I–V turnaround to the end of Ex. 42 by overlapping bar 1 of Ex. 43 with bar 4 of Ex. 42. Highlights include a fifth-position *G* pentatonic major pickup (bar 1) into a short octave-spanning *G* pentatonic minor run that drops us into third position over the V chord in bar 2, a stinging bend decorated with beautiful vibrato over the IV chord in bar 3, and a series of repetitive triplets and melodic bends that build momentum over bars 4 and 5.

Ex. 43

ON 43 TRACK



Tip: Make sure each melodic bend in bars 3 and 4 receives its full rhythmic duration.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast swing-eighth shuffle. Same as Ex. 42 adapted to a I–V–IV–I–V progression.

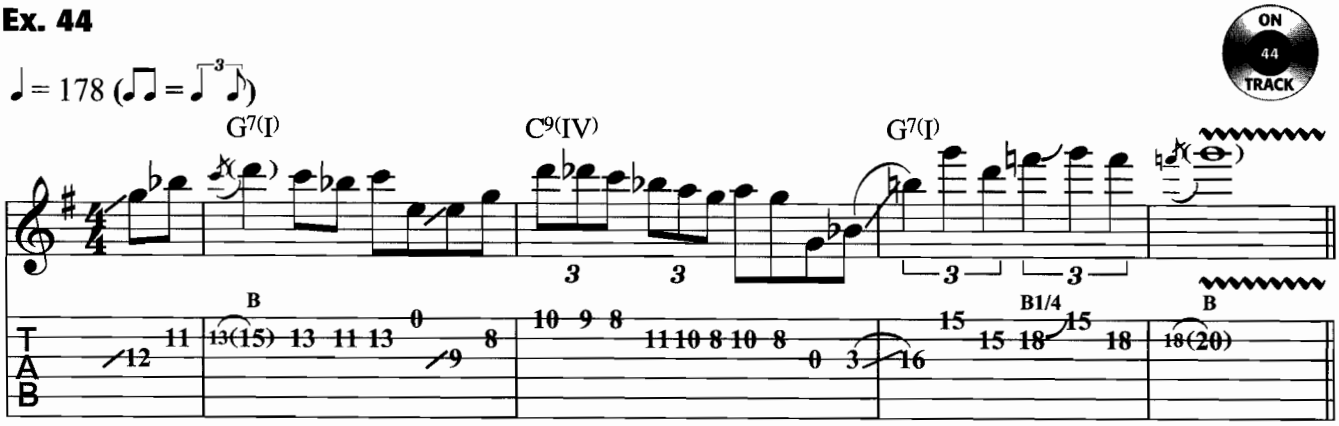
Applications: Play over bars 8–12 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* pentatonic major (bar 1) and *G* blues/pentatonic minor (bars 2–5).

Example 44

Play straight through into the next chorus by grafting Ex. 44 to the end of Ex. 43. This quick-change I–IV–I lick spans three different positions over the course of four bars. Begin with a second-finger slide into the eleventh-position *G* pentatonic minor box via a root–♭3 (*G–B♭*) pickup. Our target is a 4–5 (*C–D*) bend on the downbeat of bar 1. Remain in position for the following three notes (*C–B♭–C*) until the shift to eighth position on beat *four*. Note how this move utilizes another second-finger slide and still another open-string helper, which also happens to be identical to the next fretted note. (Happy accidents rule!) The combined pentatonic major/blues run in bar 2 is very similar to the I-chord run from bars 2 and 3 of Ex. 41, but here we rhythmically displace it over the IV chord. This completes the "call" portion of the lick before we enlist an open *G* to facilitate the slide to the fifteenth-position quarter-note triplet and whole-note response over the I chord in bars 3 and 4. The savory vibrato added to the final tonic bend is a sublime touch.

Ex. 44



Tip: Plan ahead for the position shifts in bars 1, 2, and 3.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast swing-eighth shuffle. Same as Ex. 42 adapted to a I-IV-I progression.

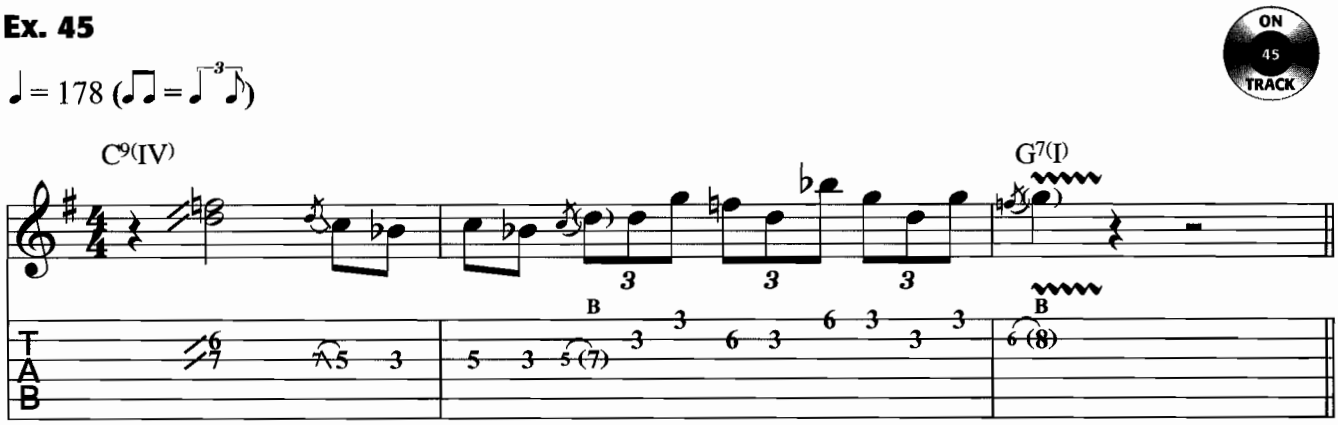
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *G* pentatonic minor/blues and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 45

Short and sweet, the IV–I lick in Ex. 45 comes off like T-Bone on 78 (that's RPM, kids). Slide into the harmonic 5–♭7 on beat *two* using your first and second fingers, hold it for two beats, and slur back down to the third-position *G* blues box with the familiar move on beat *four*. Repeat this 4–♭3 (*C–B♭*) move sans the slur and continue through the speedy triplets in bar 2 until you reach your target bent *G* on the downbeat of bar 3.

Ex. 45



Tip: Try playing this lick over bars 2–4 in a 12-bar quick-change blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast swing-eighth shuffle. Same as Ex. 42 adapted to a IV–I progression.

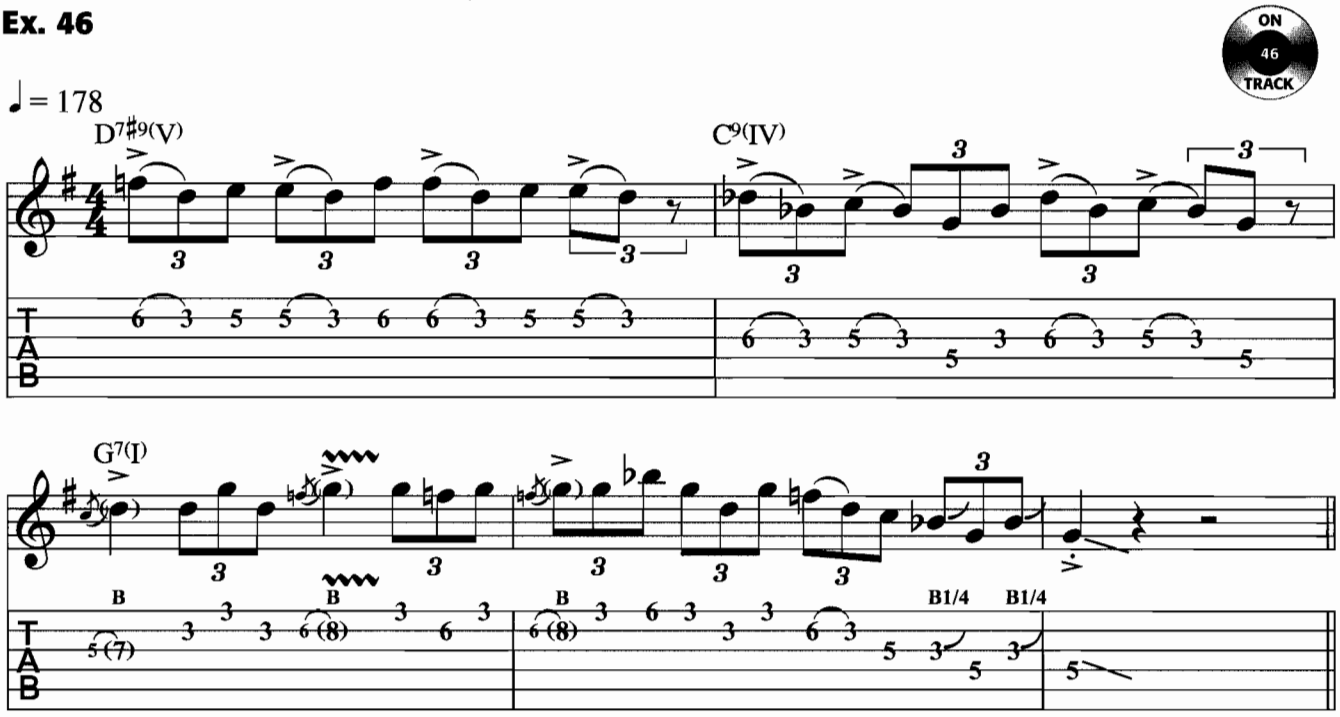
Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* pentatonic minor/blues.

Example 46

Our last uptempo swing-blues lick, Ex. 46, covers another turnaround. This time, we're playing over a V–IV–I progression. The rhythmic accents in bars 1 and 2 are the same as those in Ex. 42, though the notes are different. The eighth-note triplets in bar 1 are accented in threes, while those in bar 2 are accented in twos. We're also using the same pair of identically shaped six-note motifs found in bar 3 of Ex. 42 minus their last eighth-notes. The last three measures are pure J. Winter, from the mix of quarter-note bends and eighth-note triplets in bar 3 to the turbo-charged T-Bone run in bars 4 and 5.

Ex. 46



Tip: Don't forget to "play" the rests at the end of bars 1 and 2.

Suggested Accompaniment: Fast swing-eighth shuffle. Same as Ex. 42 adapted to a V–IV–I progression.

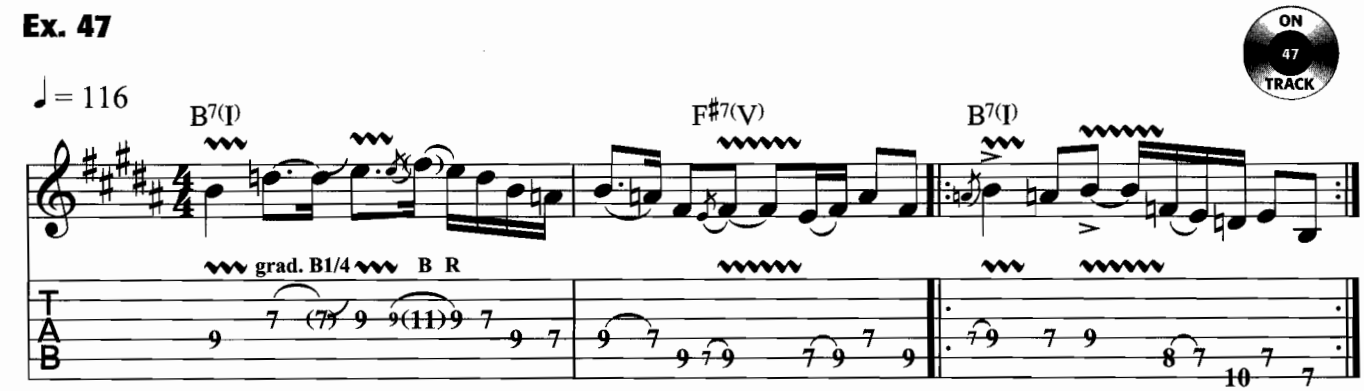
Applications: Play over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar quick-change *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *G* blues/pentatonic minor and *G* pentatonic major.

Example 47

Switching to a funky, medium-tempo 16th-note groove in the key of *B*, the ensemble figure in Ex. 47's I–V turnaround morphs into a repetitive I-chord riff in bar 3. The straight-eighth feel encourages beat subdivision by 16th-notes versus eighth-note triplets. Bar 1 begins on the root and features a lazy quarter-bend from the ♭3 (*D*) on beat *two*, a dotted-eighth 4 (*E*) bent to the 5 (*F♯*) on beat *three*, and a release to four 16th-notes (4–♭3–root–♭7, or *E–D–B–A*) on beat *four*. In bar 2, we nail the root for three-quarters of the downbeat before pulling off to the ♭7 on the last 16th-note. Play the 5 on beat *two*, and then nail it again on the "and" of beat *two* using a grace-note hammer-on to accentuate the V chord. The last four notes in the measure provide the pickup to the repetitive I-chord ensemble figure in bar 3. Here, we grace-hammer the root from the ♭7 on beat *one*, split the same two notes into eighths on beat *two*, and tie the root to beat *three*, where we pull off from the ♭5 (*F*) to the 4 on the second 16th, add the ♭3 to complete the beat, and finish the measure with the 4 and root an octave below our starting point.

Ex. 47



Tip: To form a full 12-bar blues rhythm figure utilizing this groove, play I- and IV-chord voicings on the "and" of beat *one*, the second 16th-note of beat *two*, and as a half-note on beat *three* for bars 1–10, and then play the ensemble turnaround in bars 11 and 12 as written.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! This is an ensemble guitar and bass figure played over galloping 16th-notes on the snare drum with accented eighth-note upbeats and four-on-the-floor bass drum. For authenticity, use a wah-wah pedal in a fixed position as a tone filter. Listen to "Hustled Down in Texas."

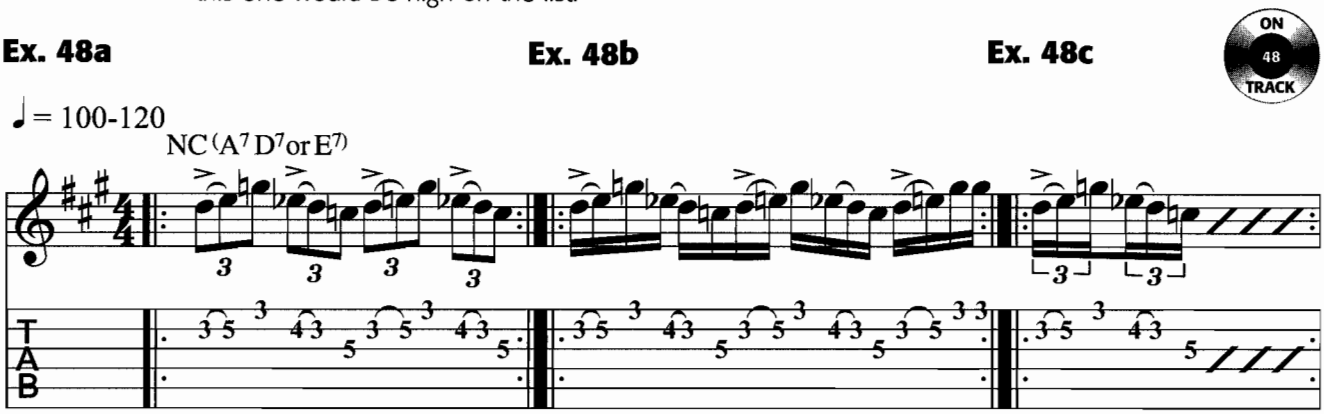
Applications: Play over bars 11–12 and into bars 1–2 of the following chorus in a 12-bar slow-change *B* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *B* pentatonic minor (bars 1–2) and *B* blues (bar 3).

Examples 48a–48c

The recurring motif in the following three examples can be traced back to the ensemble horn-section riff from T-Bone Walker's "Everytime," but I'll always think of it as a Johnny Winter lick. Let's explore its versatility with three different adaptations of this signature move in the key of *A*. Example 48a illustrates the basic six-note motif (4–5–♭7–♭5–4–♭3, or *D–E–G–E♭–D–C*) played as repetitive eighth-note triplets. Hammer-on the second note in beat *one*, pull off to the second note of beat *two*, and repeat the entire six-note lick on beats *three* and *four*. In Ex. 48b, we rephrase the motif as 16th-notes, transforming it into a displaced 3/8 hemiola against the quarter-note pulse. Since the pair of 16th motifs occupies only three beats, we add a four-note variation to fill beat *four*. Example 48c double-times the eighth-note triplets from Ex. 48a to 16th-note triplets. Naturally, we can fit twice as many of these into a single measure. If I had to nail the essence of Johnny Winter down to a handful of licks, this one would be high on the list.

Ex. 48a **Ex. 48b** **Ex. 48c**



Tip: Clamp your first finger down on the first and second strings at the third fret; hammer the 5 (*E*) with your third finger; play the pulled-off ♭5 (*E♭*) with your second finger. Transpose these licks to different octaves in all keys.

Suggested Accompaniment: Any medium-tempo blues-rock groove will do. Play Ex. 48a over swing-eighth shuffles similar to the one suggested for Ex. 38. Play Examples 48b and 48c over straight-eighth or 16th-note grooves similar to those suggested for Ex. 35 and Ex. 36.

Applications: Play over a static *A*7 vamp, or play over any measure a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *A* blues progression.

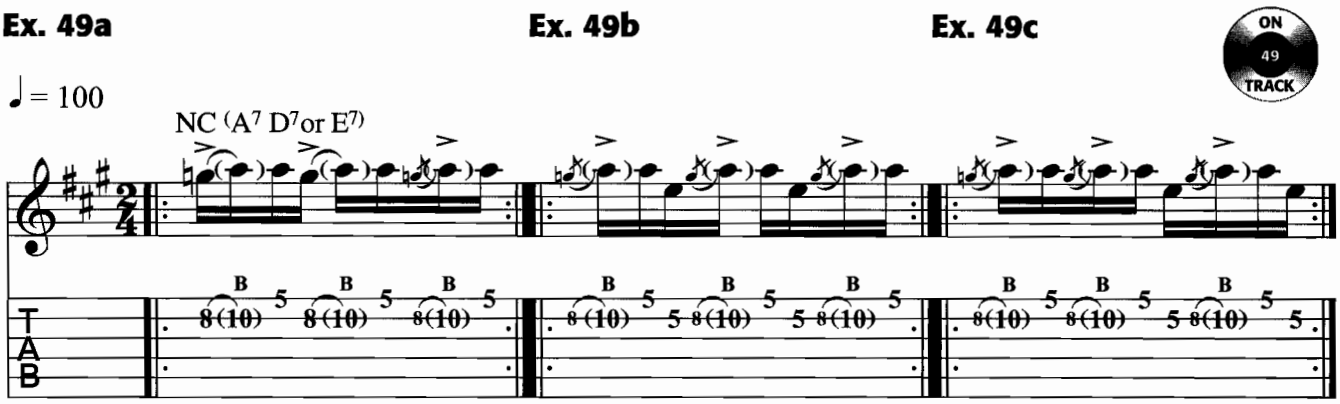
Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Examples 49a–49c

Following suit, this multi-part example derives three different 16th-note licks from essentially the same idea. We're in 2/4 in the key of *A* as Ex. 49a commences with a melodic ♭7–root bend followed by a repeat of the root. This forms a 3/16 hemiola, which is in turn repeated beginning on the last 16th-note of beat *one*. A final pair of *A* roots—one bent, one unbent—completes the measure's 3+3+2 rhythmic scheme. Drawn from the same rhythmic pattern, the 3/16 hemiola in Ex. 49b comprises two of the same notes as Ex. 49a with grace-note bends replacing the melodic bends. The last note in

each 3/16 grouping is replaced with the 5 (*E*) played on the second string. Example 49a is actually the same lick as Ex. 49b starting on the "and" of beat *two*—very "Johnny-Johnny-Bo-Bonny-Banana-Fanna-Fo-Fonny!" Be sure to play each lick at least twice. And remember: You'll get maximum melodic mileage from any lick if you master this type of rhythmic displacement.

Ex. 49a **Ex. 49b** **Ex. 49c**



Tip: Give the melodic bends in Ex. 49a their full rhythmic value. Experiment with rhythmic displacement by playing all three licks starting on every possible 16th beat. Experiment melodically by transferring the same moves to different parts of the *A* pentatonic minor, *A* blues and *A* pentatonic major scales, or any scale or mode, for that matter.

Suggested Accompaniment: Any medium-tempo blues-rock groove will do. Try playing Examples 49a–49c over straight-eighth or 16th-note grooves similar to those suggested for Ex. 35 and Ex. 36.
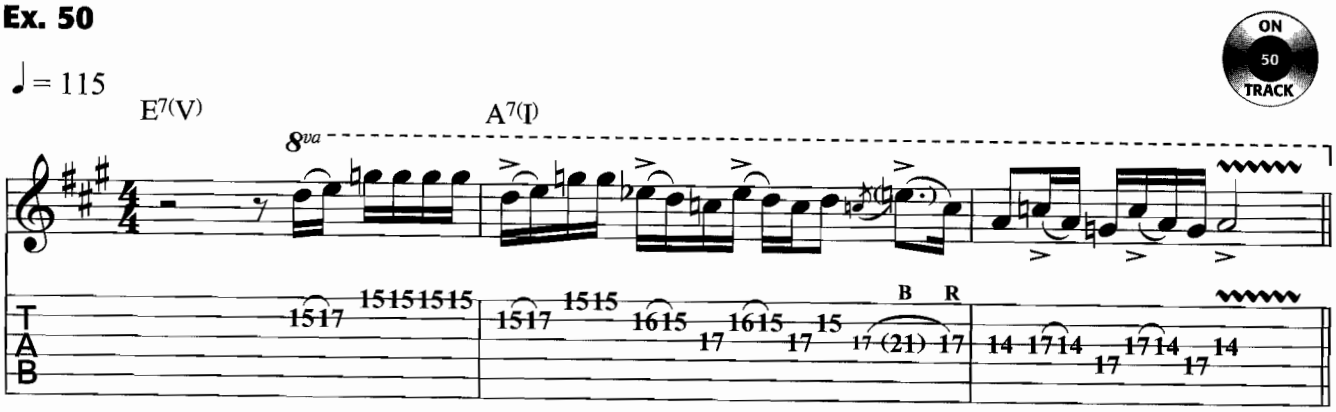
Applications: Play over a static *A7* vamp, or play over any measure in a 12-bar slow-change or quick-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor/blues.

Example 50

Reminiscent of Winter's playing on "Georgia Swing," Ex. 50 is a funky, medium-tempo 12-bar blues outing from James Cotton's *Taking Care of Business*, which features Winter sparring with Michael Bloomfield, Matt "Guitar" Murphy, and Todd Rundgren. This lick combines some of the moves we've heard in previous examples. Prep the opening pickup by barring your first finger across the top two strings exactly as you did in Ex. 48a, but one octave higher, at the fifteenth fret. Hammer from the 4 to the 5 (*D* to *E*) and play the ♭7 (*G*) four times. Repeat the first four notes of this motif on beat *one* of bar 2, but switch to the three-note ♭5–4–♭3 (*E♭–D–C*) hemiola on beat *two* and continue through the first half of beat *three*. Be sure to reinforce your bending finger for the whopping two-step major-third bend that follows on beat *four*. Slip down one fret to fourteenth position to land on the root in bar 4, and then add two rounds of a ♭3–root–♭7 hemiola before resolving to a quivering tonic *A* half note on beat *three*.

Ex. 50



Tip: Try replacing the hammer-ons in bars 1 and 2 with held whole-step bends.

Suggested Accompaniment: Funky, medium-tempo 12-bar blues with root-3–5–6–5 bass figure played on I, IV, and V chords. Play the root on beat *one*, the 3 on the "and" of beat *two*, and the remaining three notes on "and"–*four*–"and." (Play *A–C♯–E–F♯–E* for the I chord, *D–F♯–A–B–A* for the IV chord, and *E–G♯–B–C♯–B* for the V chord.) Listen to "Georgia Swing."

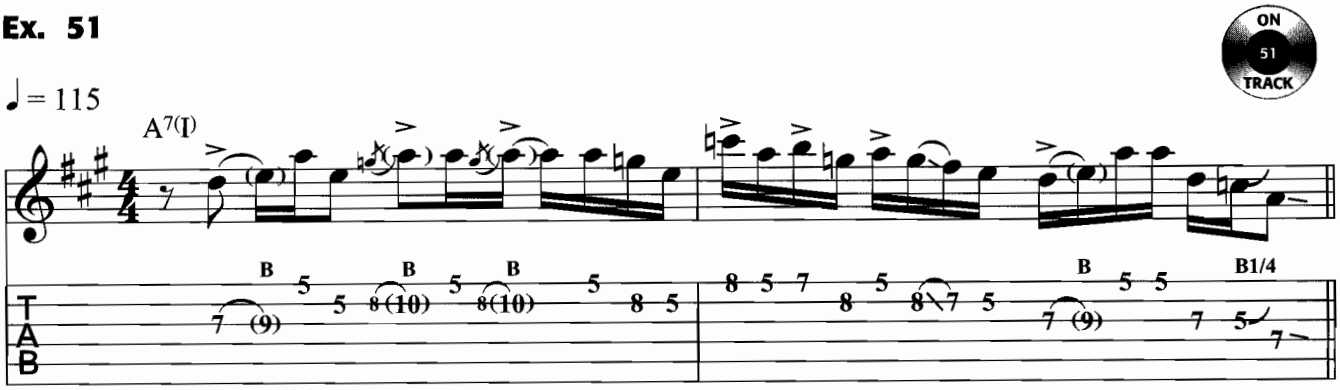
Applications: Play over bar 12 into bars 1–2 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Example 51

Continuing in the same vein and key as "Georgia Swing," Ex. 51 depicts another high-energy I-chord run. Lock into fifth position and begin with the melodic 4–5 (*D–E*) bend from the "and" of beat *one* to beat *two* and ensuing drop from the root (*A*) to the 5 (*E*). The motif on beats *three* and *four* in bar 1 reveal another bluesy Winter staple, while the first two beats of bar 2 incorporate two tones common to the Dorian mode—the 9 (*B*) and the 6 (*F♯*). You can also view this move as a combination of *A* pentatonic minor and *A* pentatonic major elements. However you choose to analyze them, these notes add a unique twist to an otherwise stock pentatonic minor phrase. The lick concludes in beats *three* and *four* with another melodic bend and more bluesy pentatonicisms.

Ex. 51



Tip: Try playing this lick over the IV and V chords.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 50.

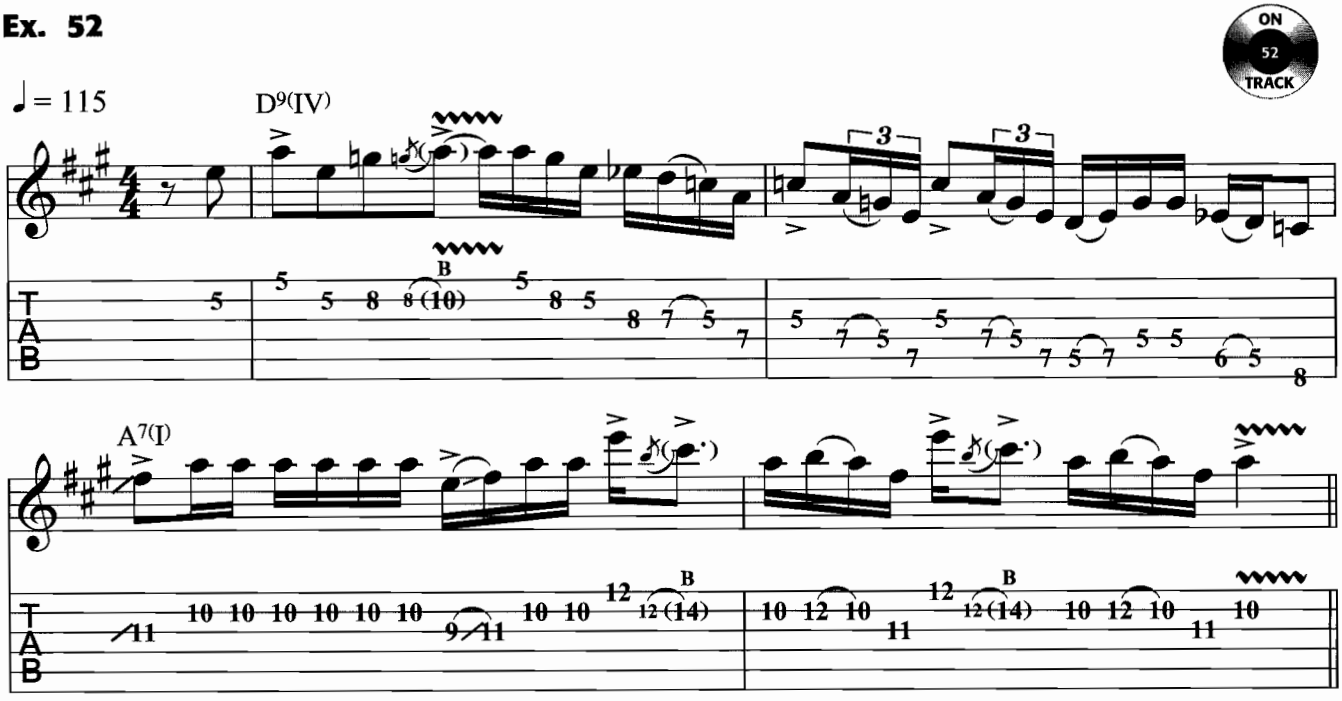
Applications: Play over bars 1–2, 3–4, 7–8, or 11–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* Dorian mode or combined *A* pentatonic minor and *A* pentatonic major.

Example 52

Moving to the IV–I change in the same groove, Ex. 52's sheet of notes can be divided into two discrete two-bar phrases, each derived from a different scale. In the first one, we lay into the fifth-position *A* blues box and touch on every note in the two-octave pattern except for the low *A* root. Furthermore, bars 1 and 2 can be separated into two signature licks. We begin bar 1 and its pickup with five eighth-notes before double-timing to 16th-notes for the descending *A* blues scale that fills out the measure. Two points: The opening 5–root–5–♭7 and bent-root motif is pure Winter. And I defy anyone to make a simple descending *A* blues scale sound cooler than the one on beats *two* and *three*. It's all in the framing, folks. The preceding motif—along with bar 2's repetitive eighth-to-pulled-off 16th-note-triplet figures and the lower-octave variation of the signature lick from Ex. 48b—are crucial to this concept. (Winter has written some killer song riffs that utilize simple ascending and descending blues scales. Check out "Guess I'll Go Away" and, of course, Rick Derringer's "Rock and Roll Hoochie Koo.") Now that we've asked a musical IV-chord question, let's answer it with the pentatonic major I-chord phrase in bars 3 and 4. Use your second finger to lead the slide into tenth position to play the 6 (*F♯*) and half-dozen *A* roots that follow it. Repeat the first half of this motif—rephrased with a melodic slide—on beat *three*, and then catch the broken, country-style oblique bend to the 3 (*C♯*) on beat *four* using

Ex. 52



your third finger while simultaneously fretting the high 12th-fret *E* (the 5) with your pinky. Follow the root–2–root–6 (*A–B–A–F♯*) run on beat *one* of bar 2 with the same move, repeat beat *one*, and sting the root on beat *four*. *Mmm, mmm*, good!

Tip: Study this one carefully; every two beat-phrase outlines a signature Winter-ism. For a cool variation of the lick in bars 3 and 4, play the first two beats in bar 3 twice and displace the broken 16th-to-dotted-eighth oblique bend to beat *one* of bar 4. Follow up by displacing the next two beats, but play beat *four* as written.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 50 and Ex. 51 adapted to the IV–I changes.

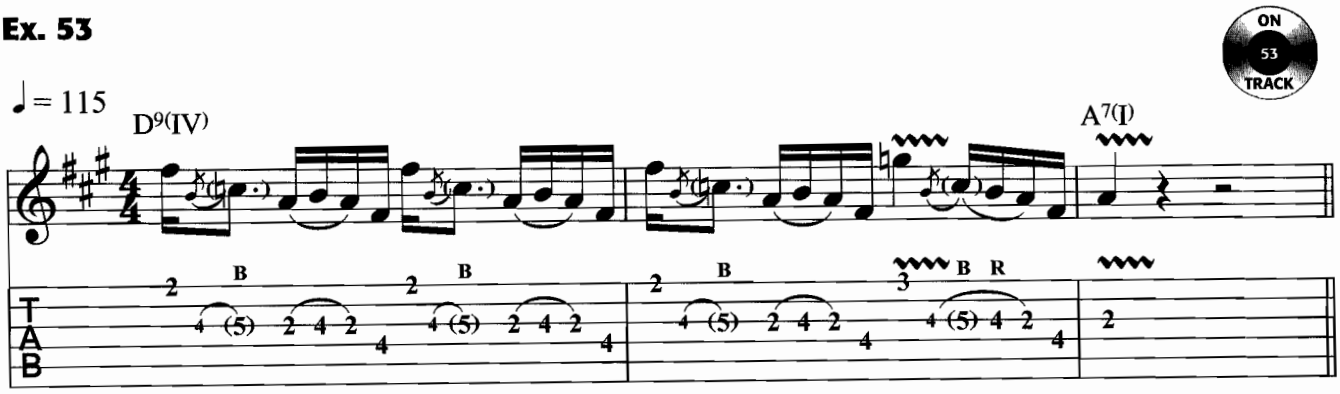
Applications: Play into and over bars 5–8 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues (bars 1 and 2) and *A* pentatonic major (bars 3 and 4).

Example 53

This unusual IV–I lick is drawn from the *A* pentatonic major scale with an altered ♭3 (*C*) and added ♭7 (*G*). Lock into second position, play the opening *F♯*, follow up with a half-step bend to the ♭3 (*C*) on the next 16th-note, and hammer-and-pull the root–2–root–6 (*A–B–A–F♯*) run on beat *two*. (Recognize this move? You just played it an octave higher in Ex. 52.) Play this two-beat motif three times. Break out of this pattern by stinging the *G* on beat *three* of bar 2, and then transform the previous 16th-note run by replacing its opening *A* with a bent and released *C*. The final *A* half-note locks in with the I chord.

Ex. 53



Tip: Move this entire example up three frets to form a fifth-position *A* blues lick. Try snapping the notes on the high *E* string with your middle finger, hybrid style.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 52.

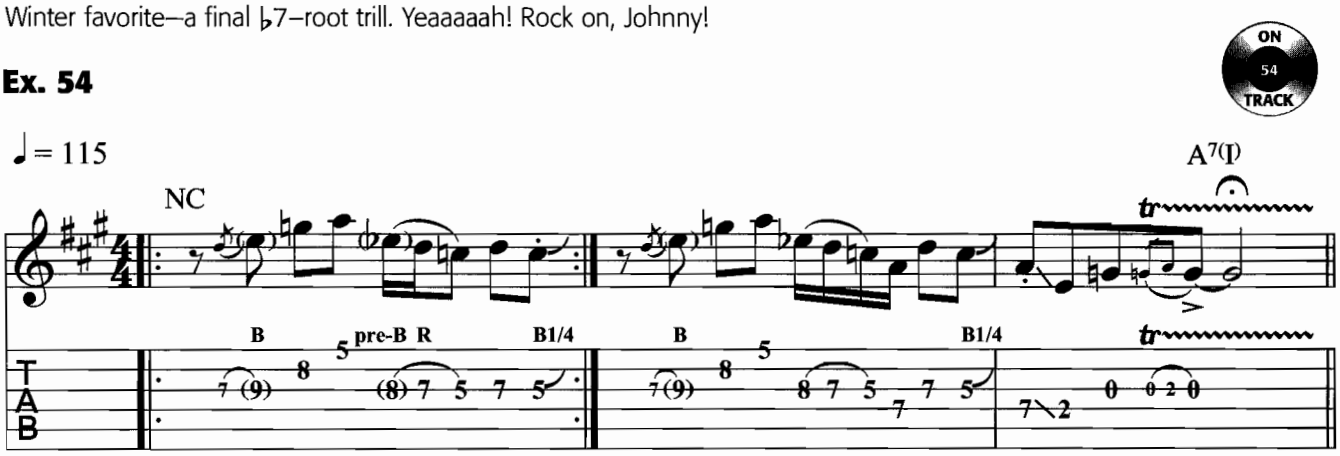
Applications: Play over bars 5–7 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic major with added ♭3 (*C*) and ♭7 (*G*).

Example 54

We'll mark the end of our Johnny Winter Lick Factory tour with a stylized J. Winter three-tag ending. A "tag" refers to a repeated one-bar lick attached to the end of a progression. Tag endings are typically inserted at bar 11 in a 12-bar blues, played three times and followed by a one-bar ensemble riff. In Ex. 54, each repeat begins on the "and" of beat *one*. Hold the opening bend in the opening 5–♭7–root (*E–G–A*) motif until beat *three*, and then silently prerelease it one half-step to cover the half-step pre-bend and release. Add the 4 (*D*), choke the ♭3 (*C*), and you're done. Repeat the entire measure. The third tag in bar 2 replaces the half-step pre-bend/release with a pull-off and adds an extra 16th-note at the end of beat *three* to create momentum into the ensemble figure in bar 4. We end with one last Winter favorite—a final ♭7–root trill. Yeaaaaah! Rock on, Johnny!

Ex. 54



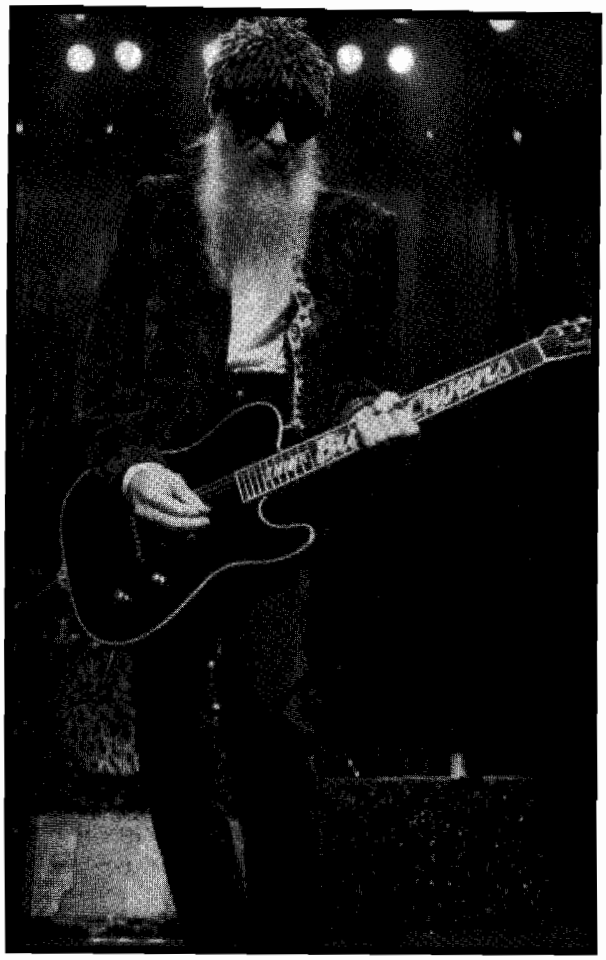
Tip: Try adding a slight ritard after beat *one* in bar 3.

Suggested Accompaniment: Drum breaks on beat *one* of bars 1 and 2 (including repeat). Bass doubles guitar figure throughout. Works well as a three-tag ending to the grooves in Ex. 36, Ex. 37, Ex. 47, Ex. 50, Ex. 51, Ex. 52, and Ex. 53.

Applications: Play starting on bar 11 in a 12-bar slow-change *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Billy Gibbons



Profile

Born: William F. Gibbons, September 16, 1949, in Houston, Texas.

Guitars: Sunburst 1959 Les Paul Standard (aka Pearly Gates), 1955 Les Paul goldtop with P-90 pickups, pink 1958 Fender Stratocaster (given to Gibbons by Jimi Hendrix in 1968), custom Dean ML Standards, 1959 Jupiter Thunderbird Gretsch made for Bo Diddley, Gretsch Billy-Bo, various Fender Telecasters, Teisco Del Ray, Rickenbacker lap steel, Mark Erlewine Chiquita travel guitar, Dean "Mummy," and the "Muddywood," made from a piece of wood from Muddy Waters's shack in Clarksdale, Mississippi. (Note: Gibbons's recent book, *Billy F. Gibbons: Rock + Roll Gearhead* [Motorbooks International] documents his extensive car and guitar collections.)

Amps: Assorted Marshalls, mid-'60s Marshall 18-watt 2x12 combo loaded with early Celestion Greenback 20s, Crate 50-watt V50 2x12 combo loaded with Tone Tubby hemp speakers, Jake Stack Rio Grande, Legend 50, modified Scholz Rockman, Fender Champ, blond piggyback Fender Bassman, assorted Fenders and Voxes.

Effects: Vox CryBaby wah, Jake Stack Bisarktone, Bionix Expandoras, Roland chorus, Roland Dimension D, Lexicon Digital Reverb, MXR Pitch Transposer, Peavey graphic EQs.

Prime Cuts: "Jesus Just Left Chicago," "Beer Drinkers & Hell Raisers," "La Grange," "Tush," "I Thank You," "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide," "Cheap Sunglasses," "Tube Snake Boogie," "Pearl Necklace," "Legs," "Sharp Dressed Man," "My Head's in Mississippi," "Rhythmeen," "Hey Mr. Millionaire," "Mescalero."

Recommended Albums: *ZZ Top's First Album*, *Rio Grande Mud*, *Tres Hombres*, *Fandango*, *Tejas*, *Deguello*, *El Loco*, *Eliminator*, *Afterburner*, *Recycler*, all on Warner Bros.; *Rhythmeen*, *XXX*, RCA; *Chrome, Smoke & BBQ: The ZZ Top CD Box Set*, Rhino/WEA; *Mescalero*, RCA; *Rancho Texicano: The Very Best of ZZ Top*, Rhino/WEA.

Video/DVD: *ZZ Top Greatest Hits: The Video Collection*, Warner Bros.

Influences: B.B. King, Jimmy Reed, T-Bone Walker, Lightnin' Hopkins, Pee Wee Crayton, Albert Collins, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Wayne Bennett, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, Jimmie Vaughan, Eric Johnson.

Influenced: Edward Van Halen, Joe Satriani, Jeff Beck, Dimebag Darrell, many others.

The Players Say...

"Harmonics have really come into their own with the advent of great amplification, whereas years before a lot of the tonal qualities of harmonic playing would have been lost due to low-fi reproduction. It's a phenomenon of the last decade where you can lean on harmonics as a definitive tonal signature."

— **Billy Gibbons**

(*Guitar Player*, March 1986)

"Billy Gibbons is Bo Diddley's bastard son from his 1956 tour of Mars. We used to play these guitar battles when he was in a band called the Moving Sidewalks and I was in a band called Texas—and he'd never admit that I won!"

— **Jimmie Vaughan**

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"(For side-of-the-pick harmonics) if you're not using a quarter or a peso, use a regulation triangular pick. The small edge, which is designated as the picking side, should be turned away from the instrument. So you are actually picking with the fatter side, the shoulder. It gives you a wider grip and offers that meat connection: When the pick slides off, the edge of the thumb can graze that twine and make it whine."

— **Billy Gibbons**

(*Guitar Player*, March 1986)

"My girlfriend walked in the door right there, and I thought, 'Oh, God, I'd better do something.' I was thinking of Billy Gibbons there, actually."

— **Jeff Beck** on recording his second guitar solo in "Big Block" from *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop*

(*Guitar Player*, February 1990)

"If we can just keep getting low down, keep getting funky and playing them blues, we'll always have a smile on our faces. I'd like to just keep spankin' the plank."

— **Billy Gibbons**

(*Guitar Player*, February 1981)

Billy Gibbons–style Licks

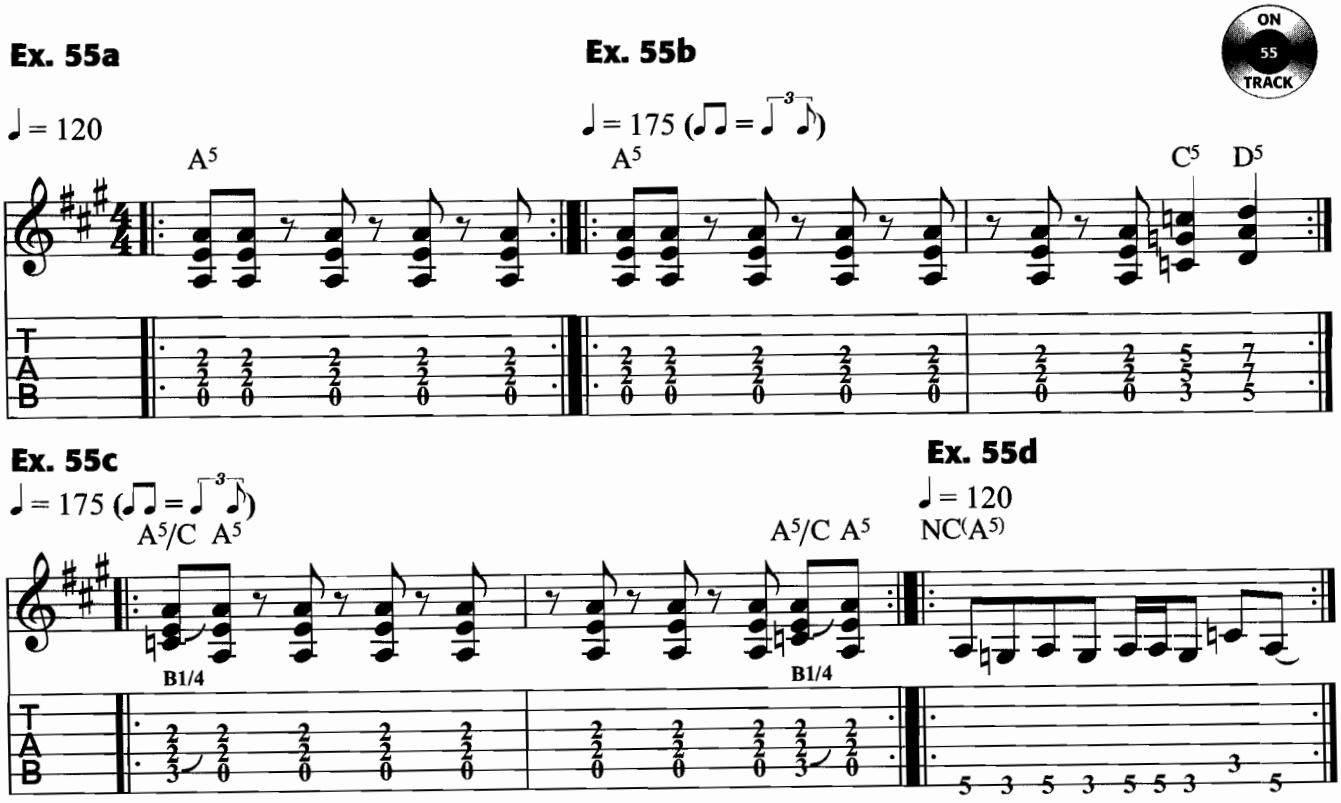
Examples 55a–55d

We'll begin with four rhythm guitar grooves that you can use to accompany many of the following Billy Gibbons–style licks. It's no coincidence that Ex. 55a chugs along at 120 BPM, roughly the tempo of a healthily excited human heart. This ZZ Top–style straight-eighth groove is a perennial arena-rock favorite guaranteed to get your blood pumping. Play the opening I chord (*A5*) on beat *one* and repeat it on every eighth-note upbeat.

In Ex. 55b, we convert the previous figure to a bona fide boogie groove by increasing the tempo, imposing a swing-eighth feel, stretching the figure to cover two measures and playing quarter-note bIII and IV chords (*C5* and *D5*) on the last two beats in bar 2.

Example 55c shows a ZZ-style variation of this basic boogie rhythm figure. This time, we decorate the tonic *A5* chords on the first beat of bar 1 and the last beat of bar 2 with quarter-bent ♭3's (*C*'s) in the bass.

Example 55d is another arena-rock chugger that injects a pair of 16th-notes into an otherwise straight-eighth-note root–♭7-root–♭7-root–♭7–♭3–root riff. Note that the eighth-note on beat *one* is tied from the "and" of beat *four* during every repeat.



Tip: ZZ Top songs often modulate to different keys during guitar solos, so be sure to practice these four grooves in all keys.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! Listen to "La Grange."
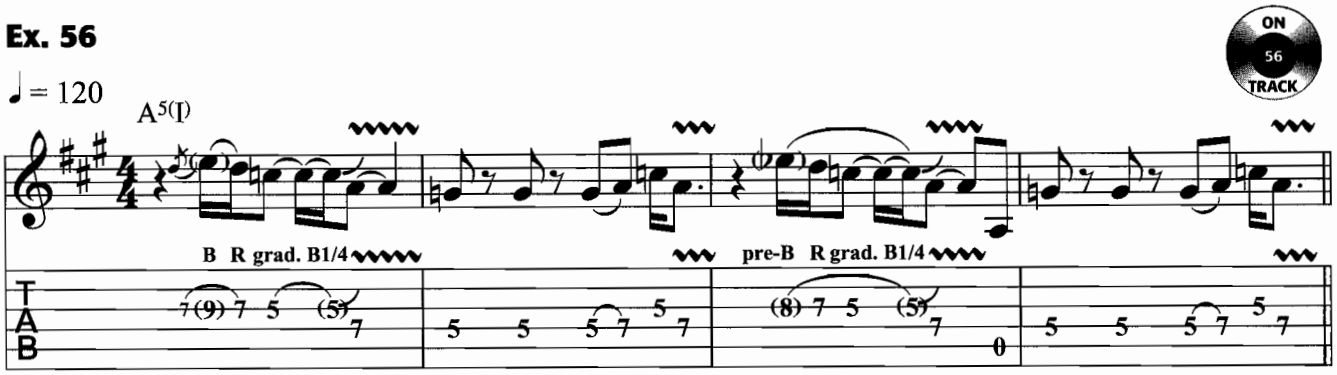
Applications: Play as static I-chord vamps or transpose to IV and V chords and apply to a 12-bar blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor (Ex. 55d only).

Example 56

This example typifies Billy Gibbons's often laid-back approach to building a solo. Rarely in a hurry, the Reverend takes his time to develop ideas and motifs such as the one in bars 1 and 2. Lock into the fifth-position *A* blues box and you're good to go. Play the opening 5–4 (*E–D*) bend and release on beat *two*, and then nail a lazy quarter-bent ♭3 (*C*) and vibrated root (*A*) on the "and" of beats *two* and *three*. Bar 2 contrasts these syncopated eighth-notes with a trio of ♭7's (*G*'s) played on three consecutive downbeats. Observe the rests following the first two beats, hammer the root from beat *three*, and add the Gibbons-approved 16th/dotted-eighth motif on beat *four*. (You'll be seeing more of this one.) In bars 3 and 4, we repeat the two-bar lick, adding three subtle phrasing variations—a half-step pre-bend, a pull-off to the ♭3, and an added open *A*.

Ex. 56



Tip: The open *A* in bar 3 is a time-tested Cream-y power-trio technique used to fill space and reinforce the bottom. By all means decorate this and all Gibbons-style licks with as many pinched-harmonic squeals as you can muster. In the words of the Reverend Billy G., "Graze that twine and make it whine!" (Pinched harmonics are produced by picking and simultaneously allowing some of the meat of your thumb to graze the string to create a harmonic node. The resultant pitch is dependant on both the note played and where you pinch the string along its length.)

Suggested Accompaniment: Works well with the 120 BPM I-chord grooves in Ex. 55a and Ex. 55d.

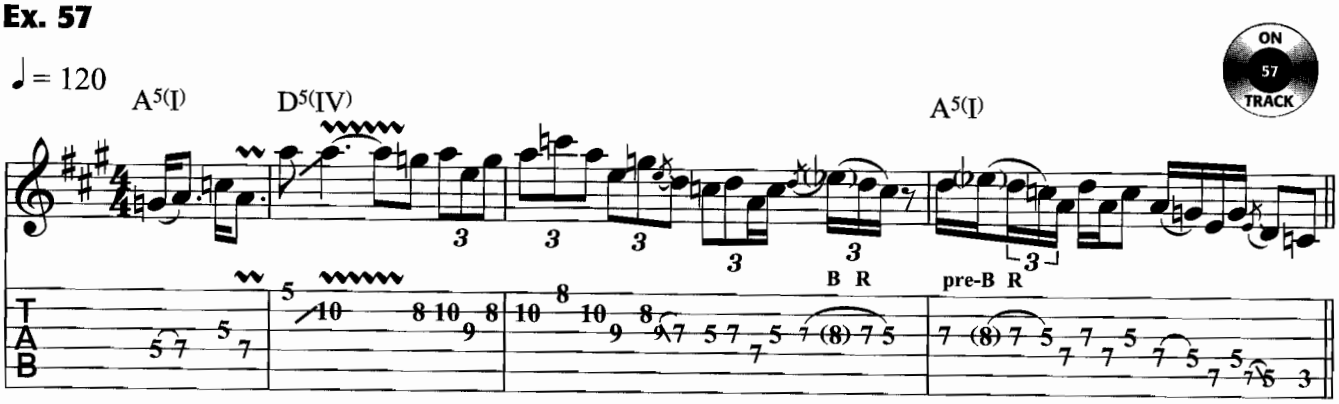
Applications: Play over a static I-chord groove in *A*.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Example 57

The pickup to Ex. 57—a pair of 16th/dotted-eighth figures—replaces the last two beats in the previous example and suggests a route Gibbons might take to break out of its repetitive two-bar motif. Highlights of this I–IV–I excursion include unison *A*'s played on the first and second strings, and a string of against-the-beat eighth-note triplets that segue to the crammed phrasing in bar 3. Begin in fifth position and then slide up to the tenth fret with your third finger to land in eighth position. The shift back to fifth position occurs on the grace-note slide at the end of the second beat in bar 2. Remain in fifth position until the final dip to third position on the last note of the lick.

Ex. 57



Tip: Study and internalize the rhythms in this lick before you apply the notes. Practice shifting between eighth-notes, eighth-note triplets, and 16th-notes.

Suggested Accompaniment: Ex. 55a or Ex. 55d adapted to I–IV–I progression.

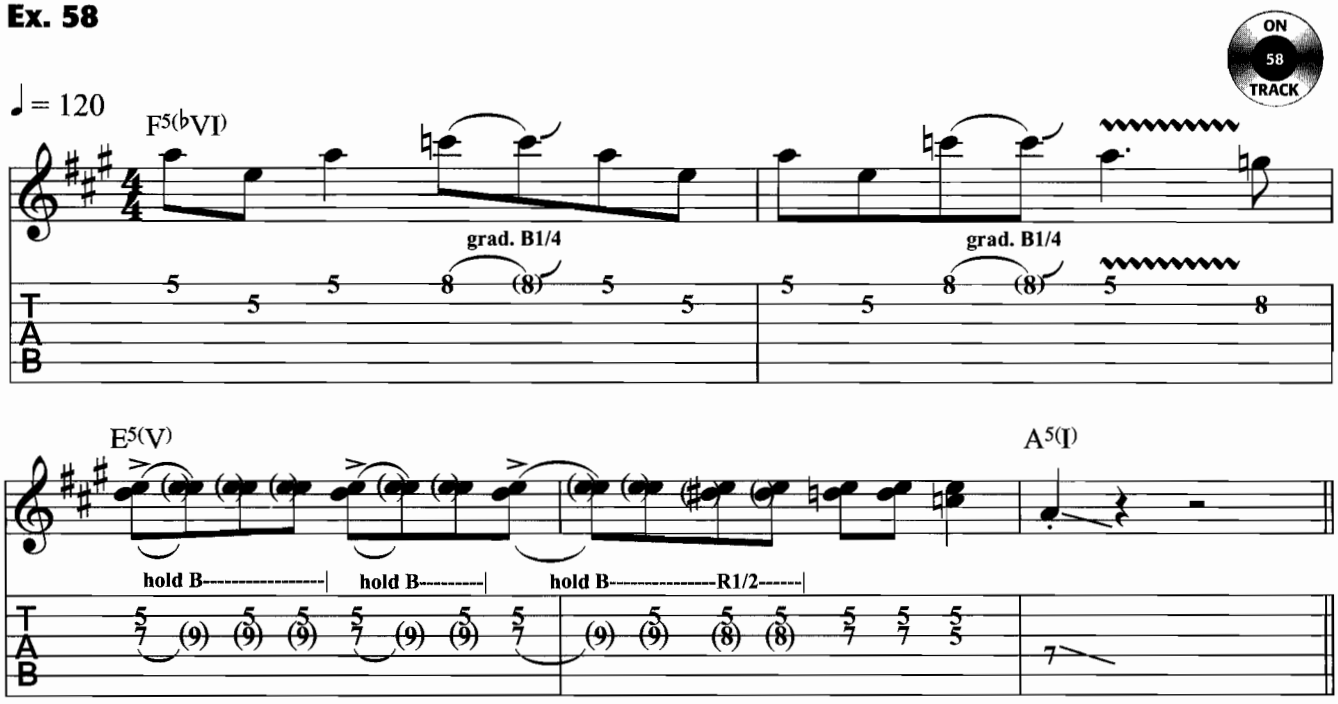
Applications: Play into and over bars 5–7 in a 12-bar *A* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Example 58

Check out how the notes in the first three beats of Ex. 58 are embellished with an additional *E* eighth-note and then rhythmically displaced to start on beat *four*. Your target is the vibrated *A* on beat *three* of bar 2. The next two bars showcase an ultra-cool move that begins with an oblique melodic unison bend, which is held and repeated two times. This 4/8 motif is shortened to 3/8 for two rounds beginning on beat *three* of bar 3. On beat *two* of bar 4, we inaudibly release the held bend one half-step and sound the *E* and pre-bent *D*♯ two times. Finally, we release the bend to *D* for a pair of eighth-notes on beat *three*, drop it to *C* to form the double-stop on beat *four*, and sting the phrase with a quick slide from the root. The whole lick floats over a ♭VI–V–I (*F5–E5–A5*) progression.

Ex. 58



Tip: Both half-step releases in bar 4 should be silent. Isolate and drill the move from *E* to *D♯* until you can gauge by *feel* how far to release the string.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 55a transposed to cover ♭VI (*F5*) and V (*E5*) chords.
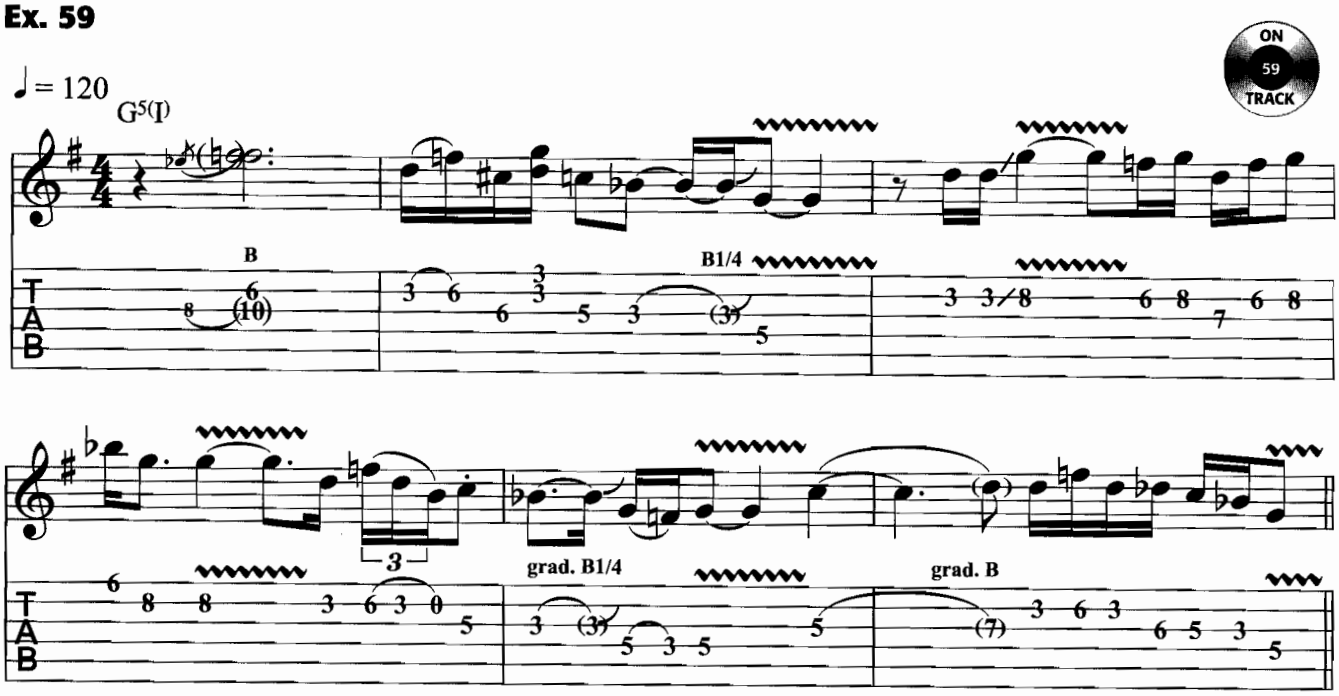
Applications: Play over bars 9–12 in an extended 16-bar blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues.

Example 59

Gibbons seems to have a fondness for starting phrases on the second beat. Let's relocate to the key of *G* for Ex. 59, which begins in sixth position on beat *two* with an oblique unison bend to the ♭7 (*F*). Immediately following the gnarly third-position run on beat *one* of bar 2, you'll find a transposed version of the syncopated quarter-bent-♭3/root move from Ex. 56. Navigate the third-to-sixth-position shift in bar 3 by sliding into the 8th-fret *G* with your third finger. The drop back to third position is achieved via a quick Jeff Beck–style double pull-off to the open *B* string on the last beat of bar 4. Be sure to drag out the gradual whole-step bend that crosses from bar 5 to bar 6 for a full three beats before capping it with the nasty blues run in the second half of bar 6.

Ex. 59



Tip: *Not* bending the ♭5 (*D♭*, written as *C♯* in bar 2) in bars 2 and 6 gives this lick its distinct character.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 55a transposed to *G*.

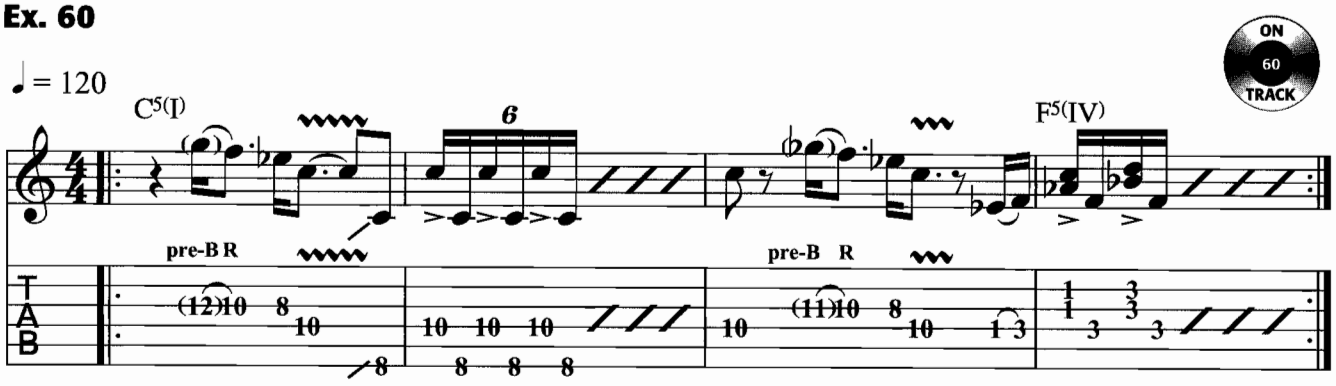
Applications: Play over a static I-chord (*G5*) vamp.

Scale Sources: *G* blues.

Example 60

This example provides further proof of Gibbons's penchant for second-beat startups and 16th/dotted-eighth groupings. It's also a textbook example of call-and-response phrasing. Bars 1 and 3 rival Johnny Winter's coolest blues scale descents, while the trilled octaves in bar 2 are a tip-of-the-ten-gallon to Jeff Beck. Pre-bend the 4 (*F*) to the 5 (*G*), release it back to *F* on the following 16th-note, and then echo the same rhythm to nail the ♭3 (*E♭*) and root (*C*) on beat *three*. You can fret the sixth-string *C* at the end of bar 1 with your thumb or index finger, but either way you'll need to slide into it to achieve the intended effect. In bar 2, we drop anchor in eighth position and trill octave *C*'s using hybrid picking (pick and middle finger) or, for those who prefer going naked, your thumb and index finger. The trick is to accent the three upper octave *C*'s in each sextuplet; these occupy exactly the same space as the notes in an eighth-note triplet. Play this figure four times, accenting each quarter-note downbeat a bit harder than the other upper-octave *C*'s. Break out of this pattern with a single upper-octave *C* on the downbeat of bar 3, in which we paraphrase the second and third beats from bar 1 with a half-step pre-bend and release. Use the eighth-rest on beat *four* to drop into first position for the two-note hammered pickup before laying into the repetitive Hammond-organ stylings in bar 4. This four-note motif, which actually resides in the *F* pentatonic minor scale, alternates 1st- and 3rd-fret double-stops with a pedal *F*, the root of the IV chord. Once you've got the entire lick down, you'll want to repeat it until the cows come home!

Ex. 60



Tip: Applying a light palm mute to the sixth string in bar 2 will help you solidify your timing and keep these hybrid-picked sextuplets under control. As I mentioned previously, Many ZZ Top songs modulate for the guitar solo. Case in point: This four-bar I–I–I–IV vamp in *C* originated as a static I-chord vamp in *A* similar to Ex. 55a.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 55a transposed to *C5* and *F5*.

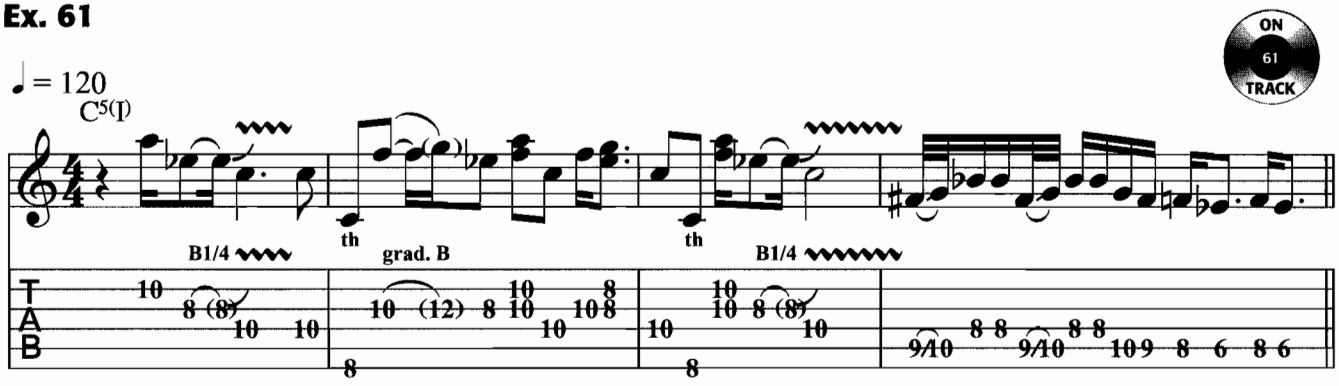
Applications: Play over repetitive four bar I–I–I–IV (*C5–C5–C5–F5*) vamp.

Scale Sources: *C* blues/pentatonic minor (bars 1–3) and *F* pentatonic minor (bar 4).

Example 61

Played over the same groove as Ex. 60 sans the IV chord in bar 4, Ex. 61 revisits several familiar Gibbons-isms. Hold off until beat *two* before playing the sweet-and-sour 6–♭3–root (*A–E♭–C*) move in bar 1—a favorite among Texas 6-stringers. The pickup and downbeat in bar 2 form a broken octave played by thumb-fretting the lower *C*. Follow up with the gradual 4–5 (*F–G*) bend initiated on the "and" of beat *one* and fill the remainder of the measure with a combination of single notes and double-stops. And though the phrase in bar 3 is based on bar *one*, octave *C*'s replace the quarter-rest on beat *one*, a double-stop is added to the beginning of beat *two*, and the *C* root on beat *three* receives two full beats. Note how the tied quarter-step bend transforms the 16th-eighth-16th rhythm on the second beat into Gibbons' pet 16th/dotted-eighth motif. The secondary response phrase in bar 4

Ex. 61



begins with a repeated four-note run (can you spot the 3/8 hemiola?) connected to a pair of recurring 16th- and dotted-eighths.

Tip: Don't rush the 32nd-note slides in bar 4; there's a subtle but noticeable difference between these and grace-note slurs.

Suggested Accompaniment: Static I-chord vamp using Ex. 55a or 55d transposed to *C5*. Try replacing the I chord in bar 4 with the IV chord (*F5*).

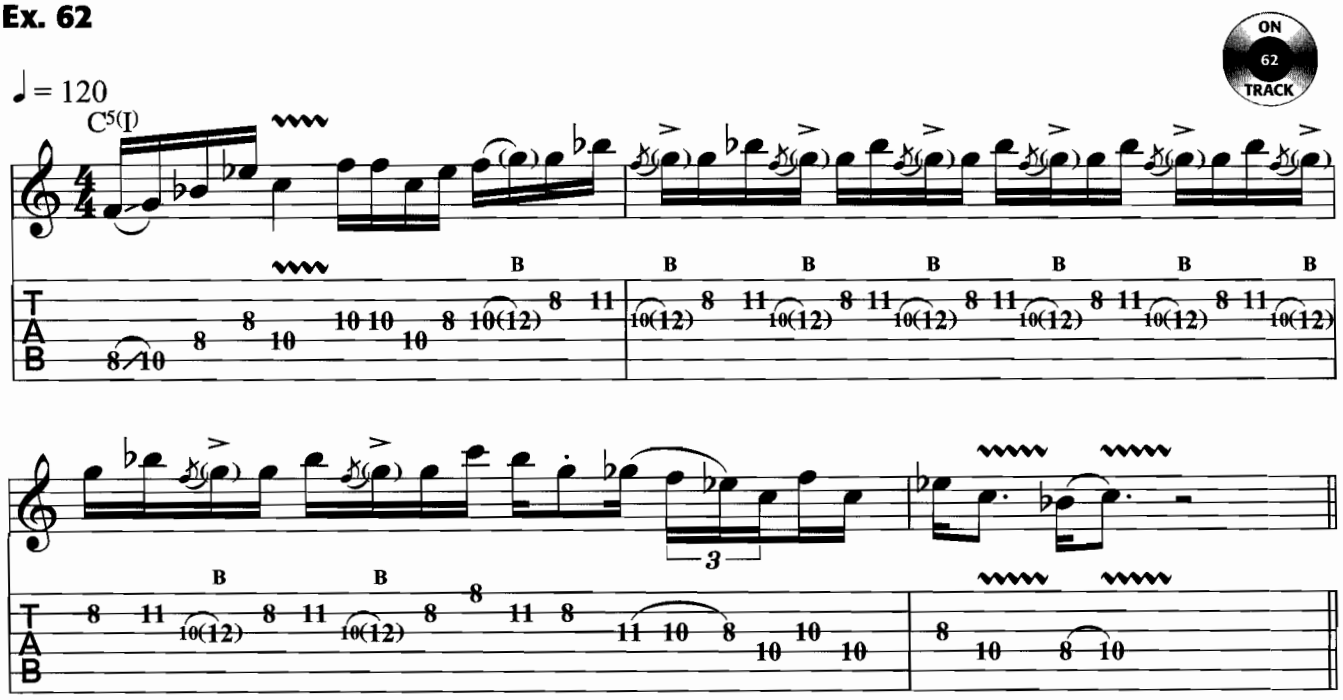
Applications: Play over a static I-chord (*C5*) vamp or over bars 1–4, 5–8, or 9–12 in a 12-bar *C* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *C* pentatonic major and *C* pentatonic minor (bars 1–3) and *C* blues (bar 4).

Example 62

This example shows an alternative to the licks in Ex. 60 and Ex. 61. We open with a 4–5–♭7–♭3 (*F–G–B♭–E♭*) motif, which could also be viewed as a slide into a first-inversion *E♭* major arpeggio (a relative-major substitute for *Cm7*), and a vibrated tonic *C* quarter-note. A quick 4–4–root–♭3 move prefaces beat *four*, where a melodic 4–5 (*F–G*) bend and the two notes that follow set the stage for a 3/16 hemiola played over the next bar and a half. Check it out: Beginning on the downbeat of bar 2, we compress the previous four-note motif into three 16th-notes by converting its melodic bend to a grace-note bend. Repeat this move eight times—note that the final *B♭* is replaced by a tonic *C*—before breaking away from it with the J. Winter–approved descending *C* blues-scale run on the third

Ex. 62



and fourth beats of bar 3. Gibbons' syncopated rhythms and slippery pull-offs keep things interesting right up to the short signature lick in bar 4.

Tip: Try converting the last 16th-note (*B♭*) from each 3/16 grouping in bars 2 and 3 to a 32nd-note and pulling it off to another *G* of equal value. You can ride both the original and modified 3/16 hemiolas over an entire 12-bar blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Static I-chord vamp using Ex. 55a or 55d transposed to *C5*. Try replacing the I chord in bar 4 with the IV chord (*F5*).

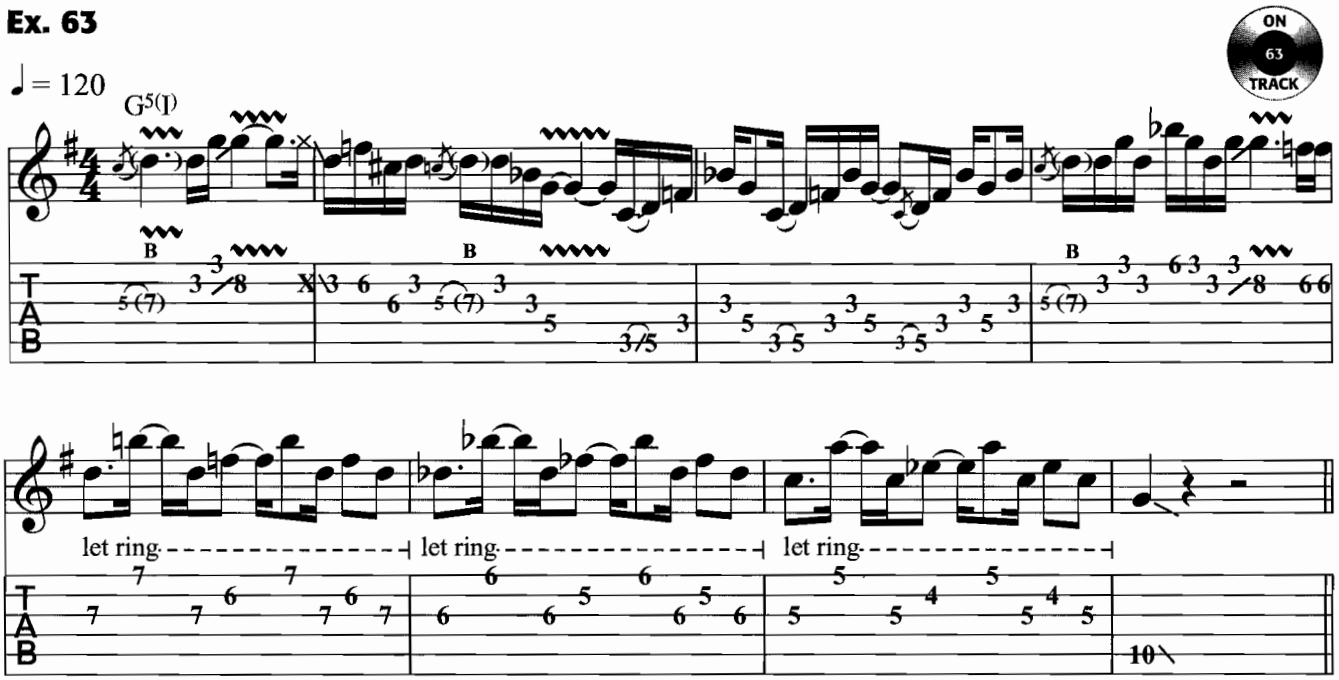
Applications: Play over a static I-chord (*C5*) vamp, or over bars 1–4, 5–8, or 9–12 in a 12-bar *C* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *C* blues.

Example 63

Several ZZ Top tunes incorporate standard blues turnarounds in unusual settings. (The interlude in "La Grange" comes to mind.) Gibbons often does the same thing in his solo improvisations, as shown in Ex. 63. Study the first four measures carefully and you'll find a mixture of familiar and new Gibbons-style moves. After laying this four-bar foundation, lock into the sixth position using your first finger to play the twin-16th pickup at the end of bar 4, and then finger the arpeggiated *G7* chord shape in bar 5 as you would an open-position *D7* chord. (This shape also outlines a first-inversion diminished triad.) Suss its rhythmic pattern—you'll be repeating it for the next two measures—and allow each note to ring for as long as possible. Once you've got this pattern wired, the rest of the lick is a breeze. Simply repeat the same moves one fret lower in bar 6 (*G♭7* in fifth position), another fret lower in bar 7 (*F7* in fourth position), and sting the tonic *G* slide in bar 8.

Ex. 63



Tip: You could remain in third position to play the final *G* at the fifth fret on the *D* string, but relocating it to the tenth fret of the *A* string gives you more room to slide. For that matter, you could transfer the *G7*, *G♭7*, and *F7* chord shapes to the second, third, and fourth strings. (If you choose this option, you'll have to lower the middle notes in each chord shape one half-step.)

Suggested Accompaniment: Static I-chord vamp using Ex. 55a or 55d transposed to *C5*.

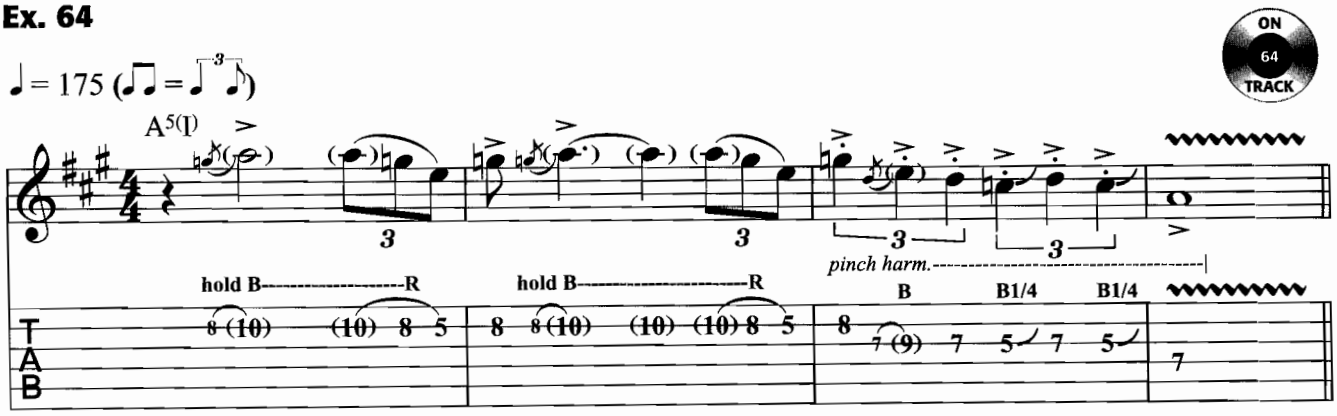
Applications: Play over a static I-chord (*C5*) vamp.

Scale Sources: *C* blues (bars 1–4 and bar 8) and *G7*, *G♭7*, and *F7* (or *Bdim*, *B♭dim*, and *Adim*) arpeggios (bars 5–7).

Example 64

Switching to fast-boogie mode in the key of *A*, Ex. 64 begins—once again on beat *two*—with a held tonic bend followed by a melodic release and pull-off. Be sure to pick the pre-bent *A* on beat 4 before you release it and pull off to *E*. The first half of bar 2 features a variation of the opening lick, but the triplets on beat *four* of both measures are identical. Bar 3's bluesy quarter-note triplets and bar 4's vibrated tonic *A* whole-note are effected with the Reverend's trademark pinched harmonics. Short, sweet, and to the point, it all happens in the fifth-position *A* blues box.

Ex. 64



Tip: Move your pick (or peso) along the length of the string to "fish" for different pinched harmonics and internalize the positions of your favorites. You can use pickup screws, body and pickguard dings, or anything else as visual landmarks. (Hell, mark them with a Sharpie, if you like!)

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 55b or Ex. 55c. Listen to "La Grange."

Applications: Play over static *A5*-based boogie vamp.

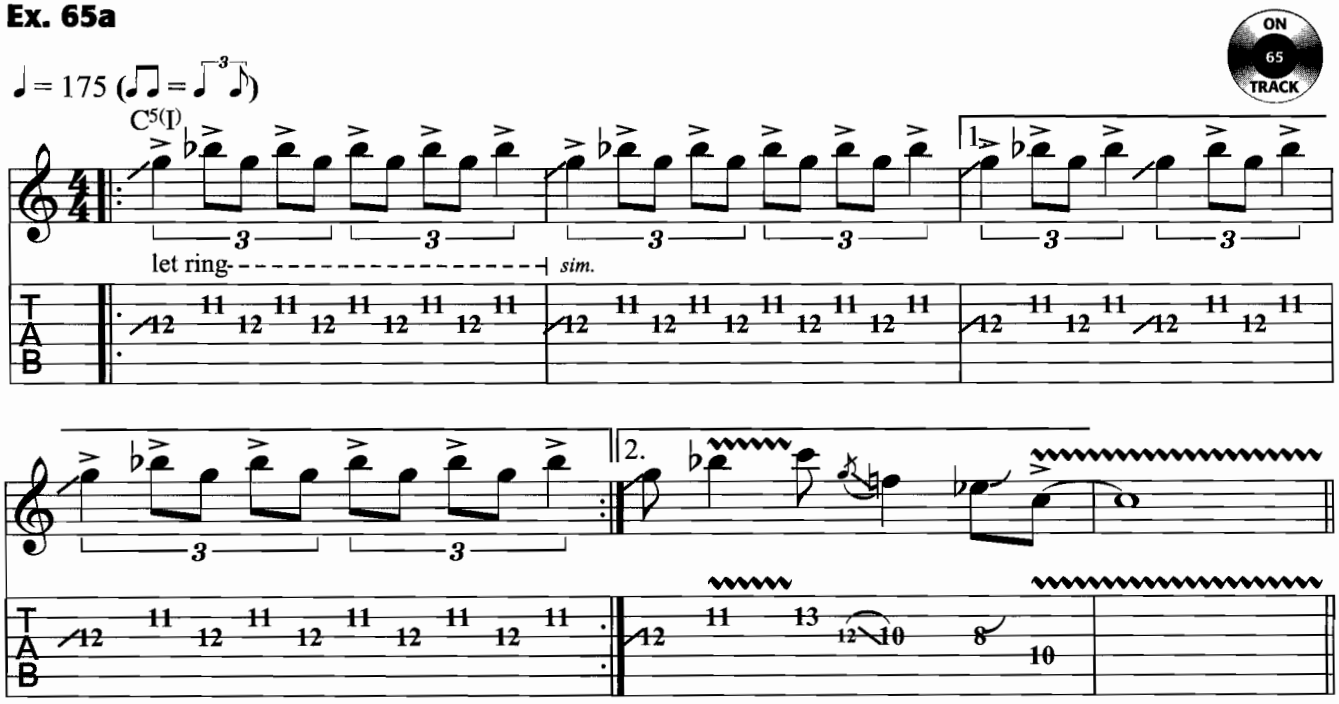
Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor/blues.

Examples 65a & 65b

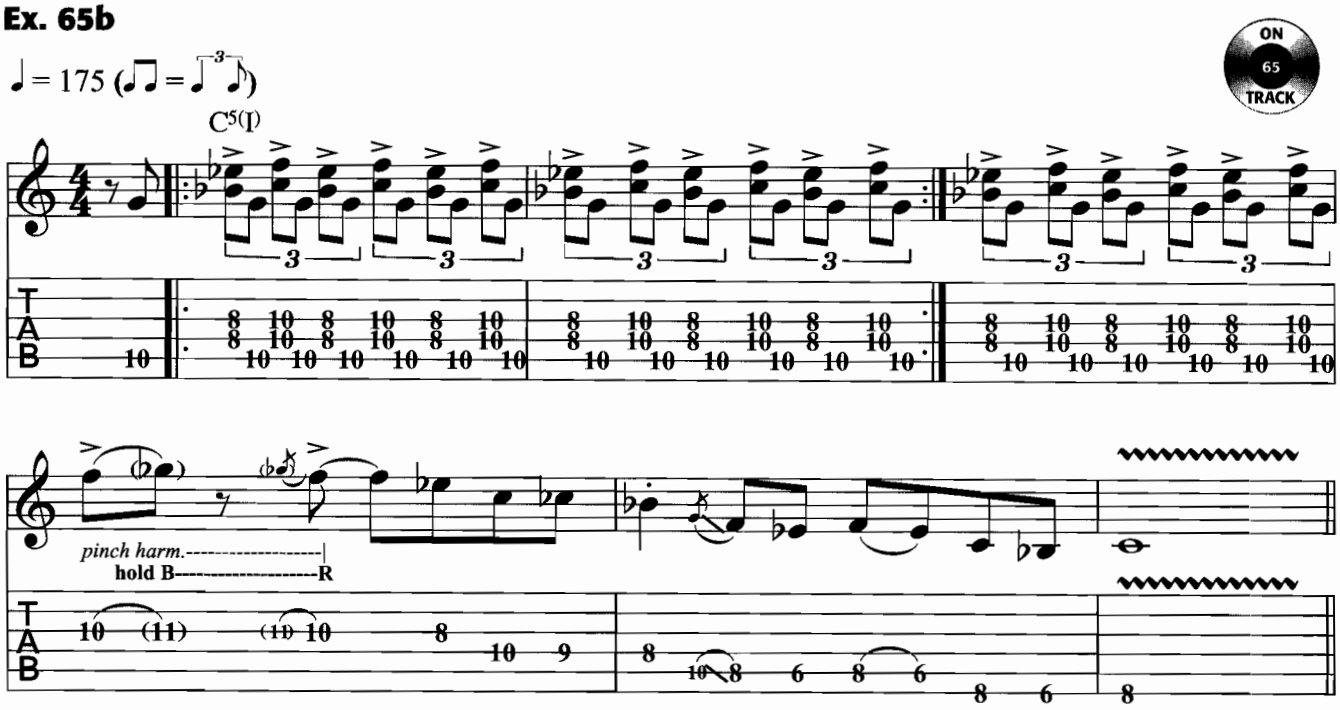
Moving back to the key of *C*, Ex. 65a emulates a classic blues-harp (as in harmonica) technique by rapidly alternating between the 5 and ♭7 (*G* and *B*♭) played on adjacent strings. Trill these notes as you did the octaves in Ex. 60's bar 2—choose pick-and-middle-finger hybrid picking or go the fingerstyle route with your thumb and index finger. One trick to sounding more harp-like—besides ample gain—is to allow each note in the held diad (two-note chord) to ring for as long as possible to induce a seamless flow. Note how the doubled frequency of the slides in the first ending creates momentum and variety in an otherwise repetitious lick. The slurred moves in the second ending can be traced back to Lightnin' Hopkins and Freddie King.

Example 65b shares similarities with both Ex. 65a and Ex. 60. The double-timed quarter-note triplets are common to Ex. 65a, while the double-stops alternating with pedal bass notes mirror the Hammond-organ emulations in bar 4 of Ex. 60. The main difference here is that every quarter-note triplet beat gets divided into a pair of eighth-notes, and the double-stops and pedal-tones appear on the third, fourth, and fifth strings. Observe the repeat and then break out of the pattern in bar 4. Be sure to hold the half-step bend to the ♭5 (*G*♭) through the eighth-rest on beat *two* before its grace-note release on the following upbeat. The remainder of the lick utilizes the *C* blues scale minus its ♭5, but with an added 7 (*B*, notated as *C*♭) passing tone.

Ex. 65a



Ex. 65b



Tip: Use your neck pickup and go for a warm, overdriven amp sound for a more convincing blues-harp timbre.

Suggested Accompaniment: Boogie patterns in Ex. 55b and 55c transposed to *C5*. Both licks also work well in any part of a fast 12-bar blues shuffle in *C*.

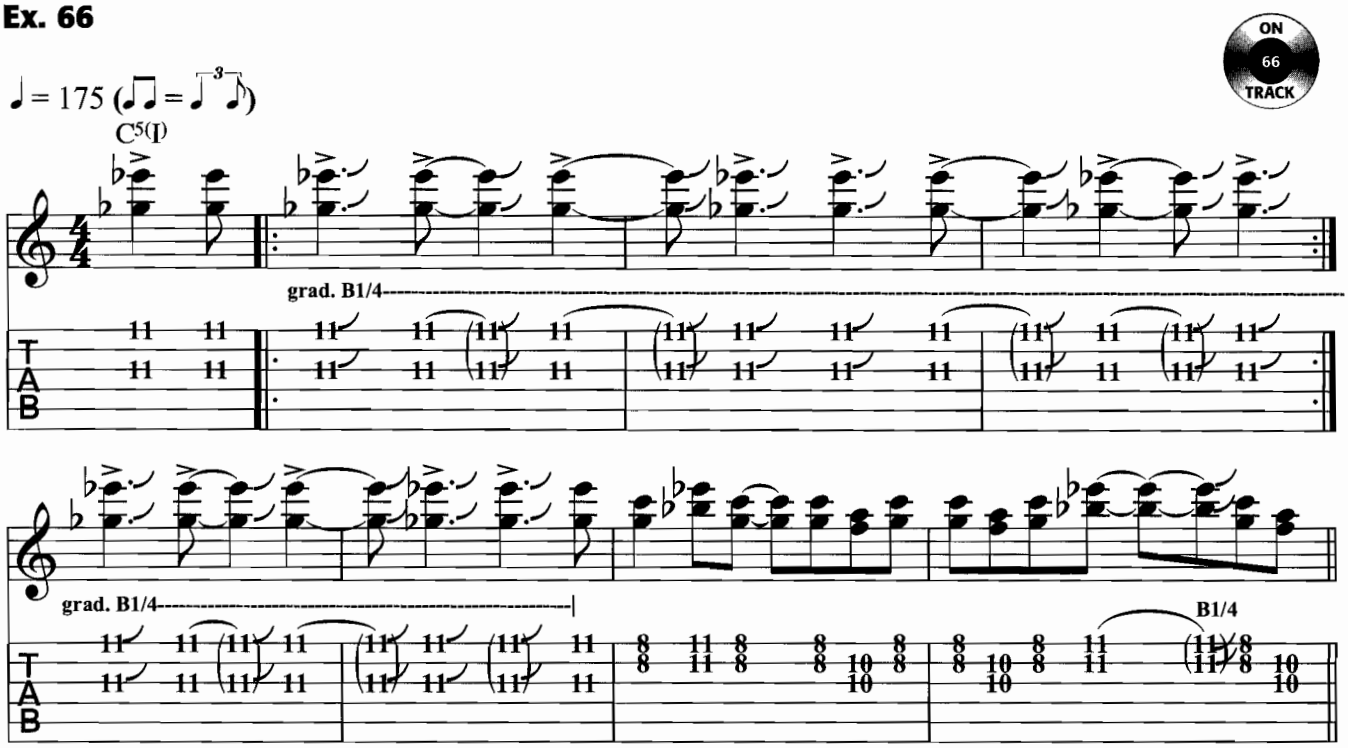
Applications: Play over a static *C5*-based boogie vamp.

Scale Sources: *C* pentatonic minor (Ex. 65a) and *C* blues (Ex. 65b).

Example 66

The spirits of T-Bone Walker and Pee Wee Crayton are alive and well in the greasy micro-bent major-sixth intervals in Ex. 66, our final Billy G. installment. The pairing of the ♭5 (*G♭*) and ♯9 (*E♭*) in this extended 3/8 hemiola creates eight measures of sustained rhythmic and harmonic tension by implying a *C* diminished chord over the tonic *C5*. Unlike T-Bone's version of this lick in Ex. 6, Gibbons stops each gradual bend just south of a tempered half-step. Break free from this three-against-four pattern with the string of Chuck Berry–style double-stops in the last two measures. Sweet!

Ex. 66



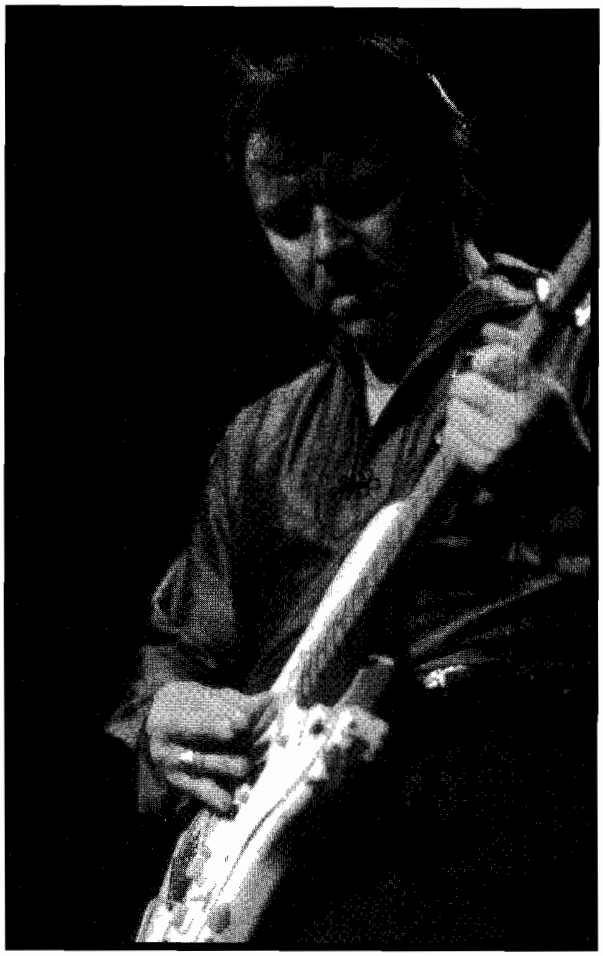
Tip: Remain anchored in eighth position for the entire lick and keep those gradual quarter-step bends smooth and supple.

Suggested Accompaniment: Boogie patterns in Ex. 55b and 55c transposed to *C5*, or fast blues shuffle in *C*.

Applications: Play over static *C5*-based boogie vamp, or into and over bars 1–8 in a 12-bar slow-change *C* blues progression

Scale Sources: *C* blues.

Jimmie Vaughan



Profile

Born: March 20, 1951, in Dallas, Texas.

Guitars: 1962, 1957, and 1958 Fender Stratocasters; 3/4-size Gibson ES-125T; Gibson ES-330; assorted Fender Telecasters; custom Charley Wirz Strat-style with Danelectro "lipstick-tube" pickups; assorted Silvertones and Harmonys; Fender double-neck 8-string lap steel.

Amps: Fender Twin Reverbs, Fender Super Reverbs, Peavey.

Effects: ADA Stereo Tapped Delay, Leslie rotating-speaker cabinet.

Prime Cuts: "Tuff Enuff," "D/FW," "Good Texan," "Tick Tock," "Brothers," "Boom-Bapa-Boom," "Six Strings Down," "Texas Flood," "SRV Shuffle."

Recommended Albums: *The Essential Jimmie Vaughan*, *Family Style* (with Stevie Ray Vaughan), *Strange Pleasure*, *Out There*, *The Fabulous Thunderbirds: Hot Stuff—The Greatest Hits*, all on Sony; *Do You Get the Blues*, Artemis.

Video/DVD: *A Tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughan*, Sony.

Influences: T-Bone Walker, Lightnin' Hopkins, Pee Wee Crayton, Freddie King, Albert Collins, Jimmy Reed, Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Albert King, Guitar Slim, Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Luther Allison, Lowell Fulson, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Bo Diddley, Little Richard, Paul Burlison, Ike Turner, Johnny Guitar Watson, the Yardbirds, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimi Hendrix, Billy Gibbons, Carlos Santana, Kenny Burrell, Denny Freeman, Bill Campbell.

Influenced: Stevie Ray Vaughan, Billy Gibbons, Duke Robillard, Ronnie Earl, Buddy Guy, Jimmy Rogers, Carlos Santana, Eric Clapton, Denny Freeman, Derek O'Brien, Eric Johnson, Kathy Valentine, many others.

The Players Say...

"I think Jimmie Vaughan influenced more bass players, drummers, guitarists, and just the public in general, and had more influence in the whole state of Texas than probably any other unsigned musician."

— **Denny Freeman**

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"My brother Jimmie actually was one of the biggest influences on my playing. He really was the reason why I started to play, watching him and seeing what could be done."

— **Stevie Ray Vaughan**

(*Guitar Player*, August 1983)

"The first time I saw Jimmie was when his group the Chessmen played in Austin.... Jimmie was the guy you always wanted to sit down and learn licks from."

— **Carla Olson**, Textones singer/guitarist

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"I remember one giant jam session when Jimmie was still in the Chessmen. He had a stack of Marshalls and I had a stack of Vox Super Beatles, and it got into an authentic destruction act. By the end of it, we each had one 12" speaker left. It ended with both of us holding feedback notes in harmony to the point where the cones heated up so much that both speakers caught on fire."

— **Billy Gibbons**

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"Jimmie was instrumental in me coming out of my shell, as far as going from a smoother player to doing some rough stuff also."

— **Duke Robillard**

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"At first, he taught me a couple of things, and then he taught me how to teach myself—and that's the right way."

— **Stevie Ray Vaughan**

(*Guitar Player*, October 1984)

"See, I learned how to play off the same records—the same B.B. King and T-Bone Walker records—that Buddy Guy and Magic Sam and Luther Allison and those guys learned off of. I really tried to be exactly like the guy on whatever song we did, and then I figured out, 'This is a lot of fun, but I can't play as good as Buddy Guy or Magic Sam or B.B., no matter what I do.' And I finally realized that what I dig about all those guys—and I don't care if they're white or black— is style. I figured I should just stand there and wait till something comes to me that I like, and then play it."

— **Jimmie Vaughan**

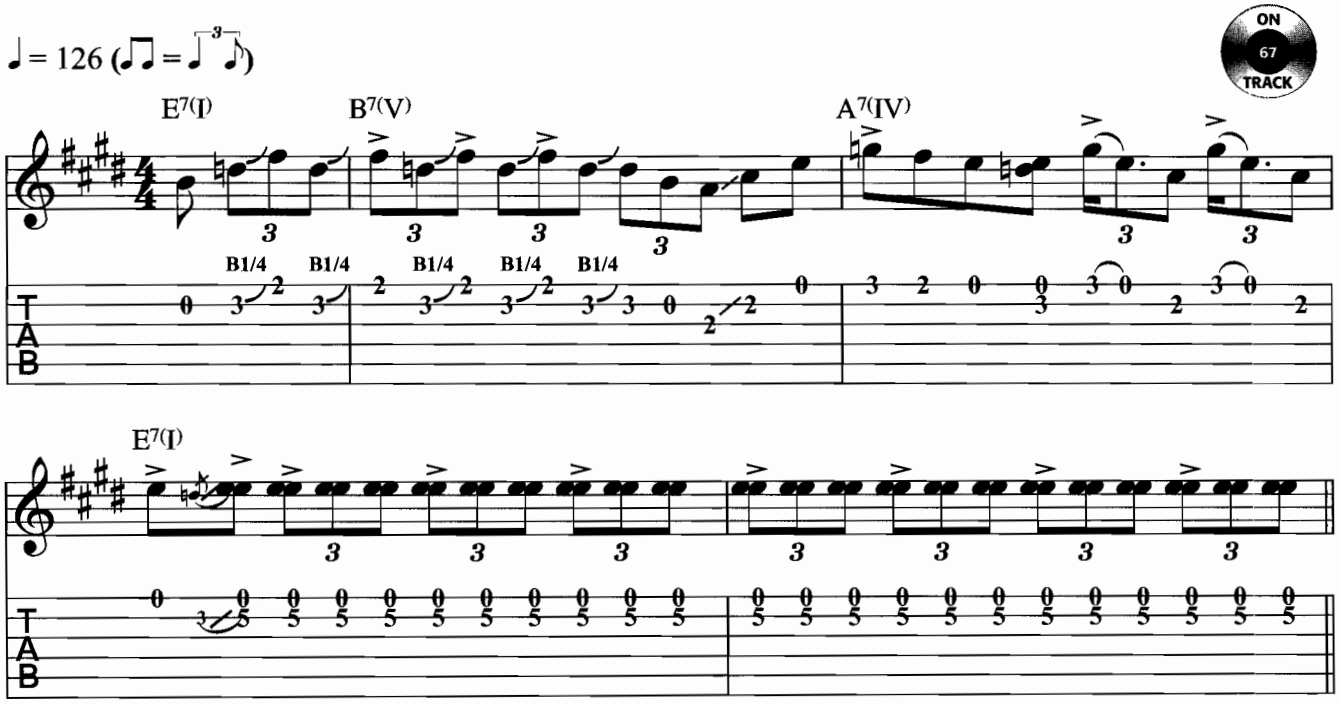
(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

Jimmie Vaughan–style Licks

Example 67

Let's dig in with a raucous V–IV–I turnaround in the key of *E*. The fourth beat in the opening pickup to Ex. 67 establishes a reverse two-against-three hemiola. Check out how the two-note ♭7–9 (*D–F♯*) motif in each triplet becomes rhythmically displaced from ♭7–9–♭7 to 9–♭7–9 over the course of the next two beats. Play the 3rd-fret notes using your second (middle) finger and 2nd-fret notes with your first (index) finger. We break away from this pattern via a ♭7–5–4 (*D–B–A*) triplet on beat *three* and a half-step slur to the 6–root motif (*C♯–E*) on the pickup to bar 3. A walk down the ♭3/♯9, 2/9, root, and combined root and ♭7 (*G–F♯–E* to *E* over *D*) precedes the identical pair of lopsided eighth-note triplets on beats *three* and *four*. The unusual fingerings in this and the following three examples result from Vaughan's penchant for open-string licks and his frequent use of a capo. The straightforward unison triplets in bars 3 and 4 require little explanation other than a suggestion to use all downstrokes, keep it rock-steady, and resist the temptation to rush.

Ex. 67



Tips: Try transposing this lick to the key of *G* capoed at the third fret, the key of *A* capoed at the fifth fret, etc. Play it fingerstyle for an authentic J. Vaughan vibe.

Suggested Accompaniment: Medium-tempo Texas shuffle over a walking root–5–♭7–octave root bass line adapted to the I–IV and V chords. Each note is played twice as a pair of swing eighths: *E–E–B–B–D–D*–octave *E*–octave *E* for the I chord, *A–A–E–E–G–G*–octave *A*–octave *A* for

the IV chord, and *B*–*B*–*F*♯–*F*♯–*A*–*A*–octave *B*–octave *B* for the V chord. Play the 3rd-fret notes using your second (middle) finger and 2nd-fret notes with your first (index) finger. Listen to "SRV Shuffle."

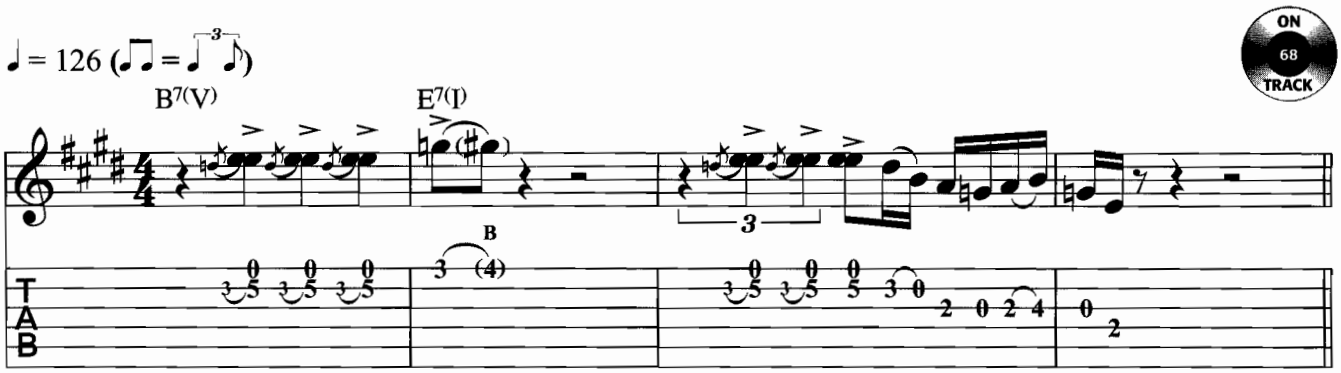
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor combined with *G* pentatonic major.

Example 68

Vaughan's spartan phrasing characterizes the four-bar call-and-response lick in Ex. 68. Beginning on beat *two* of bar 1, we play into a fresh 12-bar chorus using three oblique unison hammer-ons and sting the I chord with a melodic ♭3–3 (*G*–*G*♯) half-step bend on the downbeat before resting for three beats. In bar 3, we repeat the opening hammer-ons beginning on the second beat of a quarter-note triplet, and then juxtapose two beats of straight 16th-notes over the swing-eighth feel. This metric shift, which Vaughan utilizes quite often, creates a sense of acceleration and urgency. Use your first finger to play both the *D*–*B* pull-off and the *A* that follows on beat *four*. Again, the unusual fingering and positioning are designed for capoing in any key.

Ex. 68



Tips: "Play" the spaces between the notes as accurately as you play the notes themselves. Capo the lick in other keys and play it fingerstyle.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 67.
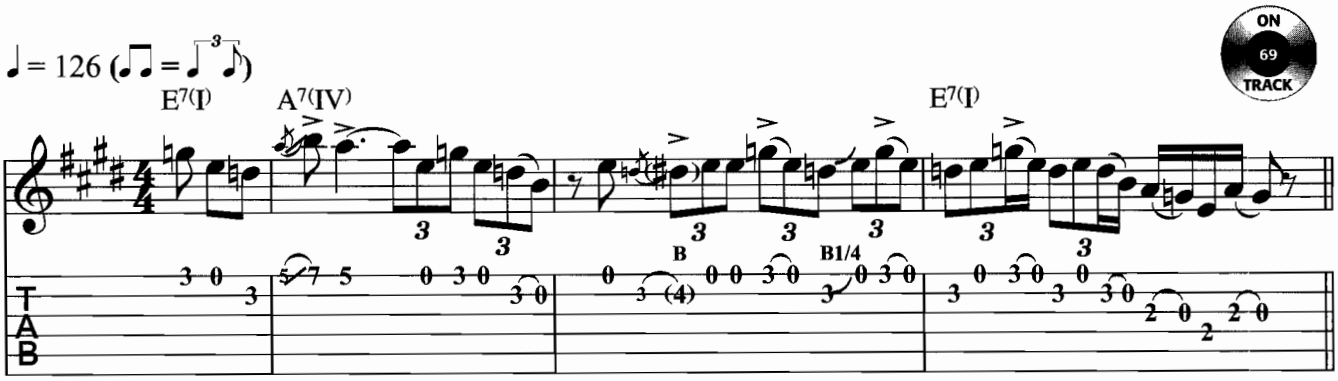
Applications: Play over bar 12 and bars 1–3 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor with added 3 (*G*♯).

Example 69

It's easy to imagine Stevie Ray Vaughan adopting and hot-rodding his big brother's licks. Example 69—another capo-friendly open-string outing designed to cover the IV–I change—offers proof that the torch was indeed passed. Commencing with a ♭3–root–♭7 pickup (*G–E–D*), we lock into the IV chord (*A7*) with a grace-note slide to *B*—the 5 of the key, but more importantly the 9 of *A7*—before dropping to its root. Take off from open *E* in the middle of beat 3's triplet, repeat the rhythmically displaced eighth-note triplet adaptation of the opening three-note pickup, and pull off to *B* to complete the triplet and the measure. Hold off until the "and" of beat *one* in bar 2 to start the second phrase's initial open *E*. Examine the next three beats and you'll find that the five-note motif beginning on beat *two* is rephrased with a quarter-bent *D* and shortened to four notes starting on the last eighth-note in beat *three*. (Note how the half-step ♭7–7 (*D–D♯*) bend creates a double chromatic approach to the tonic *E*.) On the return to the I chord in bar 4, we develop this motif even further by cramming the previous four notes into a single eighth-note triplet by double-timing its last two notes. The rhythm of this motif is carried over to beat *two*, which begins as a repeat of the first beat, but ends with a different 16th-note pull-off. Finally, the shift to straight 16th-notes on beat *three* echoes Ex. 68's use of the same technique.

Ex. 69



Tips: Practice shifting between eighth-note triplet and straight 16th-note feels. Except for the grace-note slur to *B* in bar 1, this entire lick can be played with your first finger. Why? Capo at any fret and see for yourself.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 67 and Ex. 68.

Applications: Play into and over bars 1–3 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

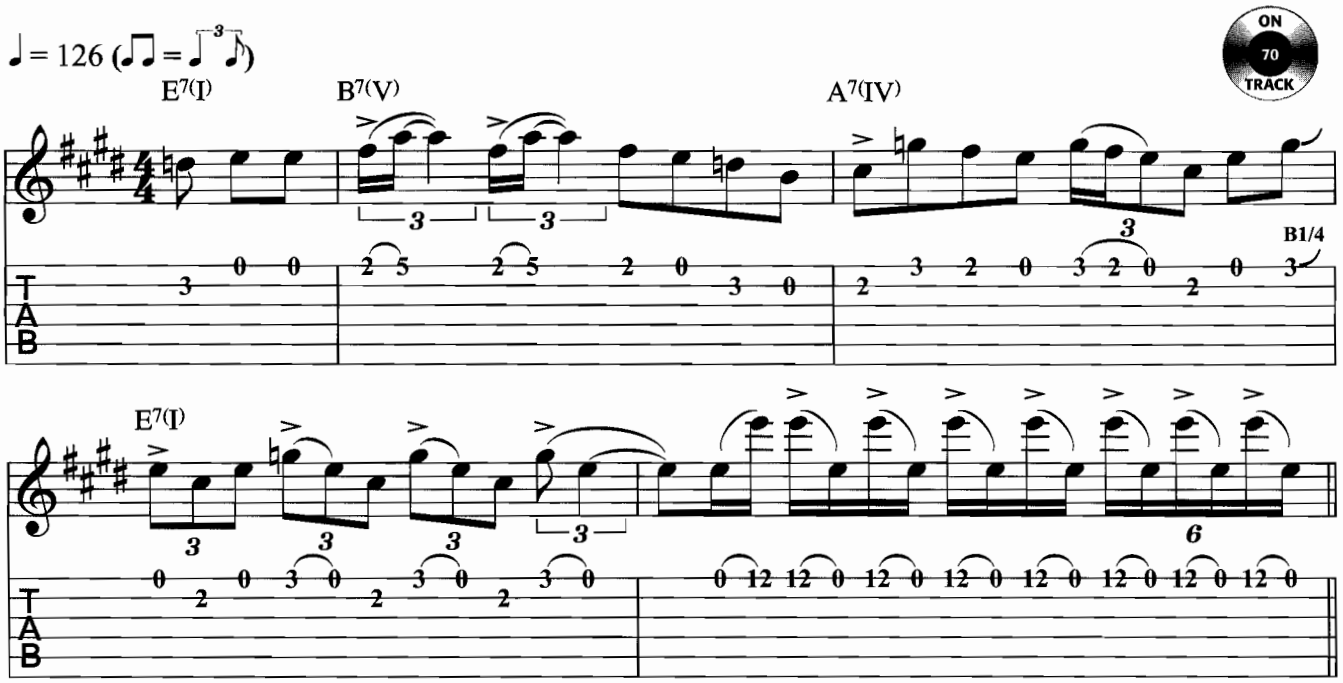
Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor with added 7 (*D♯*) passing tone in bar 2.

Example 70

Typically phrased with open-position fingering, there's a good bit of T-Bone lurking in Ex. 70, our last JV-style Texas shuffle lick. Try using the following fingering in the first three bars of this V–IV–I turnaround: Second (middle) finger for all 3rd-fret notes, first (index) finger for all 2nd-fret notes, and third (ring) finger or pinky for all 5th-fret notes. (Use any digit for the pull-offs in bar 4; my preference would be the second finger.)

The first two measures of this lick really lock into the chord changes. Check it out: Bars 1 and 2 emphasize the ♭7 of each chord–*A* for *B7* and *G* for *A7*. You'll find the spicy ♭3–root–6 (*G–E–C♯*) motif that begins on beat *two* of bar 3 sprinkled through countless Johnny Winter solos. Note how Vaughan effortlessly combines elements of both *E* pentatonic scales throughout. In bar 4, we jump to the twelfth position and get crazy with two beats of octave-*E* open-string pull-offs that morph from 16th-notes to a frenzied sextuplet on beat *four*. Flashes of Lightnin'! (See Ex. 14) Where do you go from here? Go crazier (see Tips) or mellow out–the choice is yours.

Ex. 70



Tips: Try riding the pulled-off 16ths or sextuplet in bar 4 over an entire 12-bar quick-change or slow-change *E* blues progression. Capo the lick in other keys and play it fingerstyle.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 67, Ex. 68, and Ex. 69.

Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *E* blues progression.

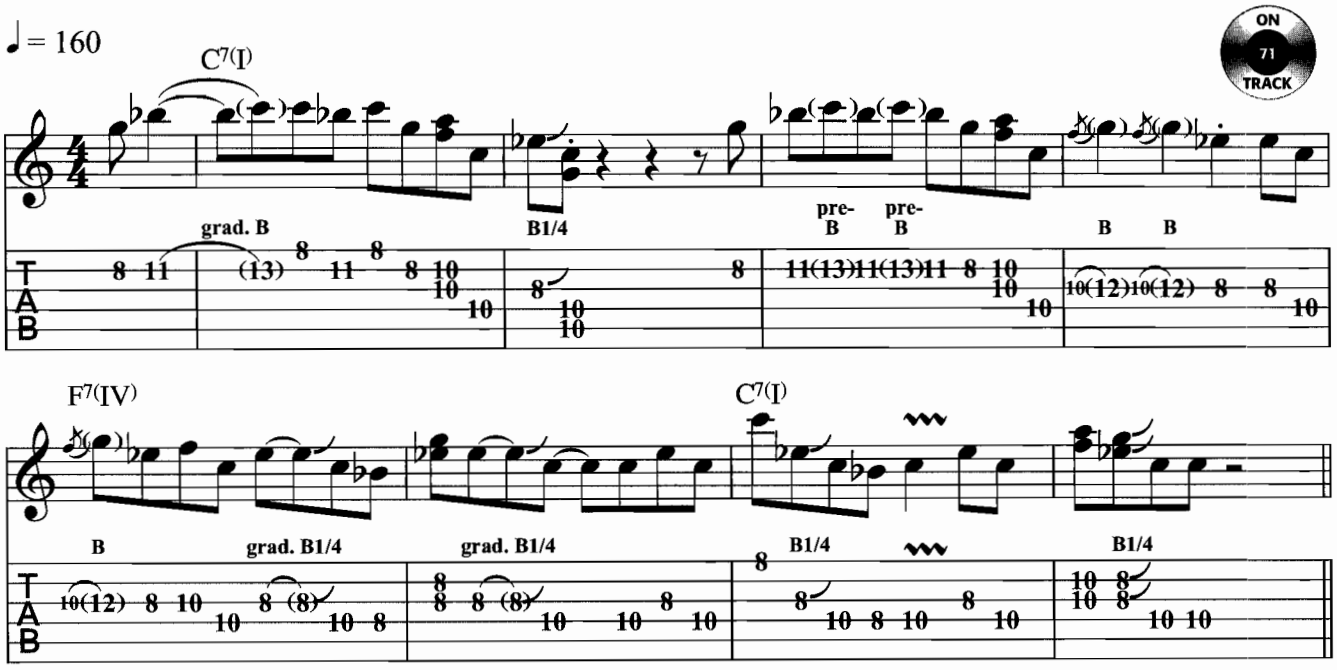
Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor/blues combined with *G* pentatonic major, or *E* Dorian mode.

Example 71

Played over a frisky, even-eighth groove, the JV-style I–IV–I lick in Ex. 71 was culled from a live jam with brother Stevie Ray, who, due to his dropped-half-step tuning, played the song in the Hendrix-approved key of *C♯*. (SRV-style licks from the same performance appear in Ex. 85 and Ex. 86.) Let's lock into the eighth-position *C* blues box and break this eight-bar lick into four two-bar phrases. The first one features a pickup from the 5 (*G*) to the ♭7 (*B♭*), which is gradually bent to a tonic *C* on the "and" of beat *one*. Shuttle between the root, ♭7, and 5 for the next two beats and finish the measure with the stacked-4–6 (*F–A*) double-stop and root on beat *four*. Complete the first phrase with the micro-bent ♭3 (*E♭*) and *C5* double-stop on beat *one* of bar 2 followed by two-and-a-half beats of silence. As if responding to a musical question, the first measure of Vaughan's second phrase paraphrases the previous one by alternating between ♭7's and pre-bent roots before repeating the last three notes from bar 1. The pair of quarter-note bends to the 5 in bar 4 preface a staccato ♭3 and two-note pickup into the third phrase. (Note the lack of rests in the second and third phrases.)

The IV-chord phrase in bars 5 and 6 begins with a bent-5–♭3–4–root motif on beats *one* and *two*, drags a lazy quarter-bent ♭3 across beat *three*, and concludes with the root and ♭7 on beat *four*. Following a downbeat double-stop, the tied gradual quarter-bend and root in bar 6 add syncopation to an otherwise straight-eighth affair. Except for the upper note of the double-stop, this entire phrase is played on the third and fourth strings. We return to the I chord for the final phrase, which features a skip from the upper-octave root down to another quarter-bent ♭3 and an assortment of roots interspersed with the ♭7 and ♭3. The fourth beats in this and the previous measure are identical. Bar 8 wraps things up with two double-stops and a pair of tonic *C*'s.

Ex. 71



Tips: Isolate and drill the pre-bends in bar 3. This lick works well in other parts of a 12-bar blues progression; try it over bars 5–12.

Suggested Accompaniment: New Orleans-style blues rumba. Play a single-note root–3–5–6–5 bass line built from the root of each chord: *C–E–G–A–G* for *C7* (I), *F–A–C–D–C* for *F7* (IV), and *G–B–D–E–D* for *G7* (V). Play the root on beat *one*, the 3 on the "and" of beat *two*, and the 5–6–5 run as three eighth-notes starting on the "and" of beat *three*. Listen to "You Were Wrong."

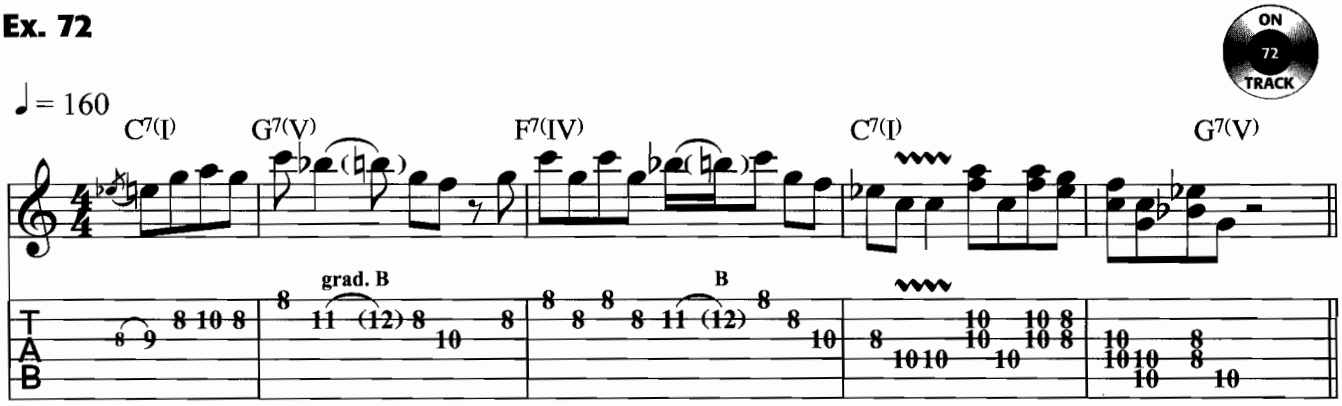
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–8 in a 12-bar slow-change *C* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *C* pentatonic minor with added 6 on top of the 10th-fret double-stops in bars 1, 3, and 8.

Example 72

Our final Jimmie Vaughan–style lick is distilled from the same brotherly jam. The V–IV–I turnaround in Ex. 72 introduces a taste of *C* pentatonic major to its opening pickup and the familiar double-stops in bar 3. Grace-hammer from the ♭3 to the 3, add the pentatonic-major-derived 5–6–5 motif and you're off and running. Nail the V change with the high *C* and syncopated half-step *B♭–B* bend in bar 2. (Though *B* is the 7 of *C*, it functions here as the 3 of *G7*, so this *C–B♭–B* motif creates a bluesy sus4–♭3–3 suspension and resolution that totally locks in with the V chord. Brilliant!) The remainder of the lick is purely *C* pentatonic minor with one exception—another bent *B* in bar 2. This one, however, resolves to a high *C*, forming a double chromatic approach to the 5 of *F7*, the IV chord. Finally, bars 3 and 4 lean heavily on the double-stops we touched on in Ex. 71. And once again, all of the action takes place in the eighth position. Thanks, Bro!

Ex. 72



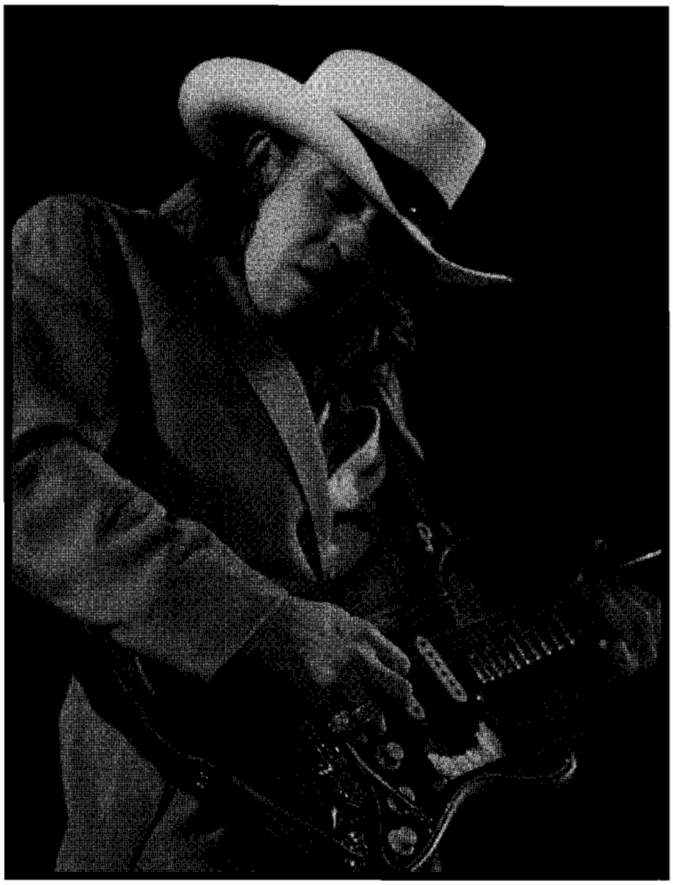
Tips: Be sure to differentiate between the gradual and melodic bends to the 7 *B* in bars 1 and 2.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 71 adapted to V, IV, and I chords.

Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a 12-bar slow-change *C* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined pentatonic major and *C* pentatonic minor with added 7 (*B*) passing tone.

Stevie Ray Vaughan



Profile

Born: October 3, 1954, in Dallas, Texas.
Died August 27, 1990, near East Troy, Wisconsin.

Guitars: 1959 Fender Stratocaster ("Number One"), 1964 Fender Stratocaster ("Lenny"), 1962 Fender Stratocaster with Danelectro "lipstick-tube" pickups ("Charley"), Strat-style Hamiltone, 1958 dot-neck Gibson ES-335, Gibson Johnny Smith model, Danelectro double-neck.

Amps: Fender Vibroverbs (1x15), Fender Super Reverbs (4x10), Fender Harvard, various Marshall "plexi" heads, Marshall 100-watt Super PA, Marshall 200-watt Major, Marshall JCM 800, Marshall 4x12 and 4x15 speaker cabinets, Marshall 2x12 combos, 150-watt Dumble Steel String Singer.

Effects: Vox CryBaby wah, Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face, Ibanez TS-808 Tube Screamer, Fender Vibratone speaker cabinet.

Prime Cuts: "Pride and Joy," "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Texas Flood," "Lenny," "Scuttle Buttin'," "Cold Shot," "Stan's Swang," "Crossfire," "The House Is Rockin'," "Tightrope," "Riviera Paradise."

Recommended Albums: *Texas Flood*, *Couldn't Stand the Weather*, *Soul to Soul*, *In Step*, *Family Style* (with Jimmie Vaughan), *In the Beginning*, all on Sony.

Video/DVD: *Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble: Live at Montreux 1982 & 1985*; *Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble: Live from Austin, Texas*, both on Epic.

Influences: Jimmie Vaughan, Lonnie Mack, T-Bone Walker, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Rogers, Pat Hare, Hubert Sumlin, B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, Guitar Slim, Johnny Guitar Watson, Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton.

Influenced: Eric Johnson, Eric Clapton, Jimmie Vaughan, Buddy Guy, John Mayer, and two generations of blues guitarists.

The Players Say...

"I'm very proud to say my brother gets plugged into his soul's emotions. He wails and he's mellow, all at the same time, without ever playing it the same way once, much less twice. 'Gotmortone,' I call it."

– Jimmie Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, July 1986)

"He was tremendous; one of the greatest players I ever met. It was an honor to have him do my songs. Music is handed down to the next generation. And he wasn't just some white kid saying 'I got it.' He told the truth; 'I got this from Buddy Guy or Albert Collins,' or whoever he wanted to talk about. That was some of his greatness."

– Buddy Guy

(*Guitar Player*, March 1991)

"You just keep listening and trying to find the sound, because it's in your hands as much as anything. It's the way you play."

– Stevie Ray Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, October 1984)

"He did some Jimi Hendrix, some Albert King, a little of me, but he had a direction and he made it work. The kids really liked his fire."

– Albert Collins

(*Guitar Player*, March 1991)

"A song needs to breathe. The rhythm needs to breathe. Sometimes the best way to get some punch out of something is to slow down right before you hit it. Kind of like a slingshot–pow!"

– Stevie Ray Vaughan

(*Guitar Player*, February 1990)

"('Travis Walk' and 'Scuttle Buttin'); that's all that ninth stuff, which was like an old song of mine, 'Chicken Pickin'." Any time he'd do a song like that, he'd call me up and say, 'Listen to this. I'm using it again!' He was quite a guy."

– Lonnie Mack

(*Guitar Player*, March 1991)

"That boy was something else, man. I feel like he was one of the greatest guys and guitar players who ever lived."

– Hubert Sumlin

(*Guitar Player*, March 1991)

"Sometimes it's effortless and sometimes it's a struggle, but the chill bumps are always worth it when you get 'em."
– Stevie Ray Vaughan
(*Guitar Player*, February 1990)

"I think Stevie's playing the state-of-the-art blues at the moment. There's no one else who has that tone and the venom that goes with it."
– Jeff Beck
(*Guitar Player*, February 1990)

"I destroy everything eventually, because I play so hard."
– Stevie Ray Vaughan
(*Guitar Player*, August 1983)

Stevie Ray Vaughan–style Licks

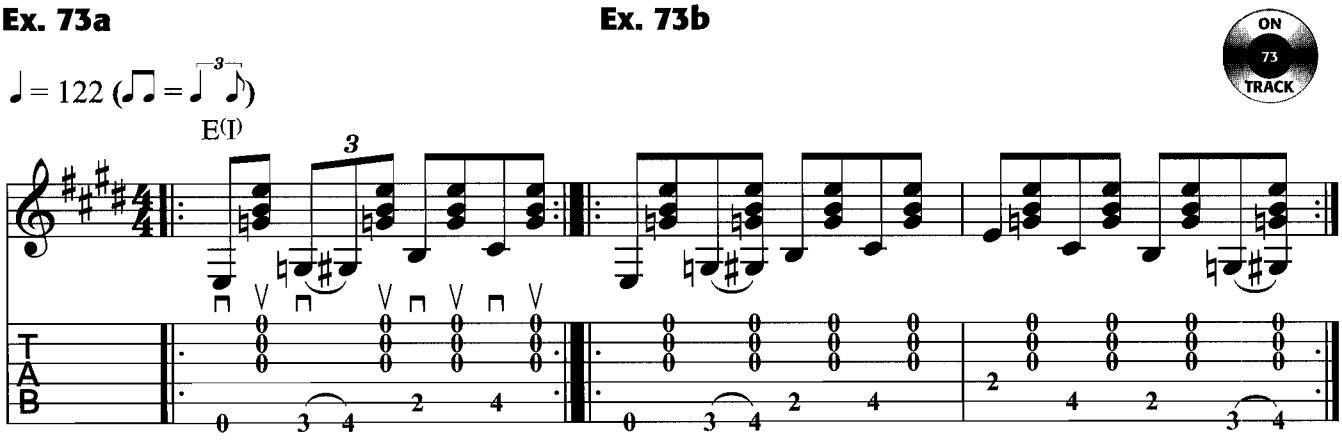
To achieve total authenticity, you'll need to tune your guitar down one half-step (*E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, B♭, E♭*, low to high) for the next 18 examples. As a result, all notes and chords will sound one half-step lower than notated and referred to in the text. Taking a cue from Jimi Hendrix–who pioneered the idea in order to decrease string tension and strain on his voice while increasing his power trio's bottom end–Stevie Ray Vaughan adopted this tactic early in his career. You could certainly play all of these examples in standard tuning, but, besides being in the wrong key, they just won't sound the same. I'll remind you to tune down in the "tips" box following each example.

Examples 73a–73b

Example 73a shows how to assemble the I-chord figure in a medium-tempo SRV-style Texas shuffle. Anchor a low *E5* chord on the fifth and sixth strings and get comfortable with the bass notes before adding the staccato "all-purpose open-string passing chords" on the eighth-note upbeats. Note how the open *G* implies an *E7♯9* sound.

In Example 73b, we stretch the previous figure across two measures by adding an extended root (octave)–6–5–♭3–3 (*E–C♯–B–G–G♯*) bass line. There's a slight alteration in the bass line on beat *two*

Ex. 73a **Ex. 73b**



of bar 1; the full eighth-note triplet from Ex. 73a has been replaced by a pair of hammered swing eighths. The trick is to hammer-on the 3 (*G♯*) as you simultaneously upstroke the open-string chord. (Of course, you can also play the previous bass line in this extended version.) When applied to a 12-bar progression, this I-chord figure is not transposed to the IV and V chords. (See Suggested Accompaniment.)

Tip: Tune down one half-step. Though it's standard practice to play the bass notes with downstrokes and the open-string passing chords using upstrokes as notated above, a reliable source once told me that SRV would often reverse this approach. Try it and see what you think—use upstrokes for the bass notes and downstrokes for the open-string chords. It feels backwards but it sounds so right!

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! For the IV (*A7*) and V (*B7*) chords, use standard open *A7* and *B7* voicings. Play their root/bass notes on *one-and* and the "and" of beat *three*, and the upper notes of the chord on *two-and* and *four-and*. Listen to "Pride And Joy."

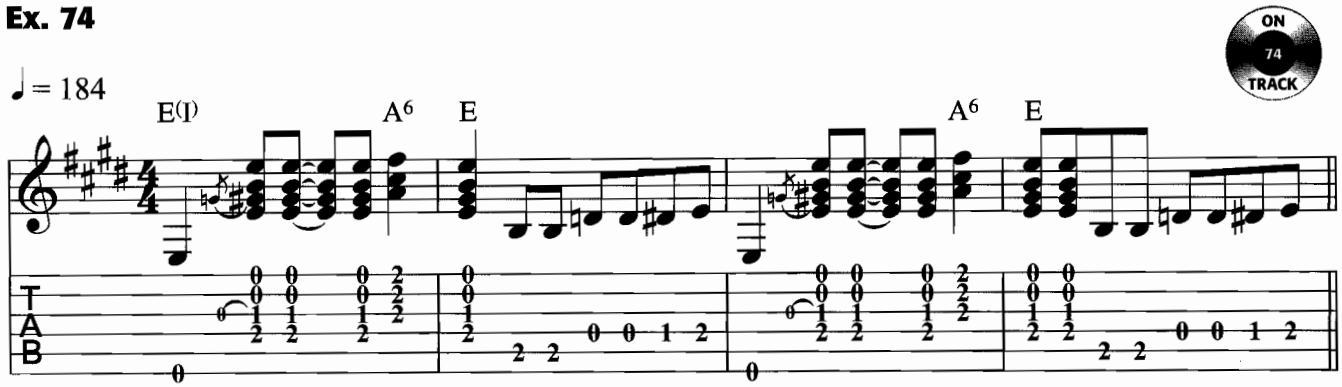
Applications: Play over bars 1–4, 7–8, or 11–12 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic major combined with added ♭3/♯9 (bass line).

Example 74

This example depicts an uptempo eighth-note-based SRV-style rhythm figure. Pre-finger the entire open *E* chord shape before hitting the open *E* note on beat *one*. Open the *G* string on beat *two*, hit the top four strings and simultaneously grace-hammer the *G♯*, then follow through with two more upstroked *E* chords on the "and" of beats *two* and *three*. Finish the measure by barring the *A6* chord on beat *four* with your second or third finger. This move creates a momentary suspension that alludes to the IV chord. Nail the *E* chord on beat *one* of bar 2, add the ascending single-note *E7* arpeggio run (with an added *D♯* passing tone) and you're good to go. The only variation that occurs during the repeat of this figure is an additional eighth-note *E* chord on the "and" of beat *one* in bar 4.

Ex. 74



Tip: Tune down one half-step. As you transpose this I-chord figure to cover the IV and V chords, try fretting the bass notes with your thumb.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it! Unlike Ex. 73a and Ex. 73b, it's easy to transpose this rhythm figure to the IV (*A*) and V (*B*) chords to form a complete 12-bar blues. One adjustment: Play the V-chord figure for both bars 9 and 10 in place of the V–IV change usually associated with that part of the progression. Listen to "You'll Be Mine."

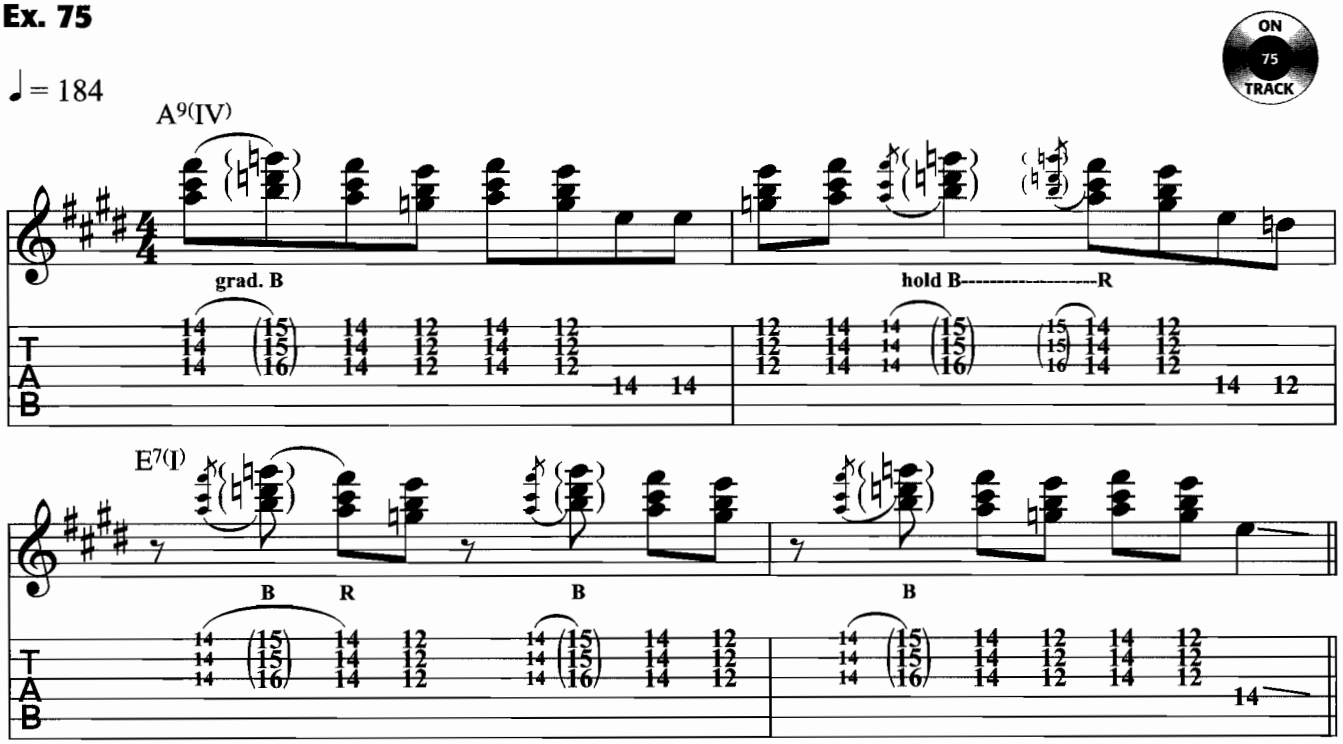
Applications: Play the complete figure over bars 1–4 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression. Play half of the figure (bars 1 and 2, or bars 3 and 4) over bars 7–8 and 11–12.

Scale Sources: *E7* and *A6* chord tones with ♭3 (*G*) and 7 (*D♯*) passing tones.

Example 75

The triple-stop bends in Ex. 75 attest to SRV's raw power. (Keep in mind that Vaughan used heavy-gauge strings with an 0.012 for the top *E*.) Play this riff over the IV–I change in a 12-bar progression crafted from the rhythm figure illustrated in Ex. 74. You'll definitely need backup, so be sure to reinforce your bending finger (I recommend the third) by placing another finger directly behind it on the fretboard. Lock into twelfth position and give it a whirl. When you bend multiple strings from the same fret, the rate of pitch change will differ from string to string—the distance of the bend will be greater on the lower pitched strings. Though parallel half-step bends are cool, the goal here is to bend the first and second strings a half-step and the third string a whole-step. If this sounds complicated, don't worry; this occurs naturally because the amount of pitch bend will be greater on the *G* string than on the *B* and *E* strings.

Ex. 75



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Be sure to observe the held bend and grace-note release in bar 2.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 74 adapted to IV–I changes.

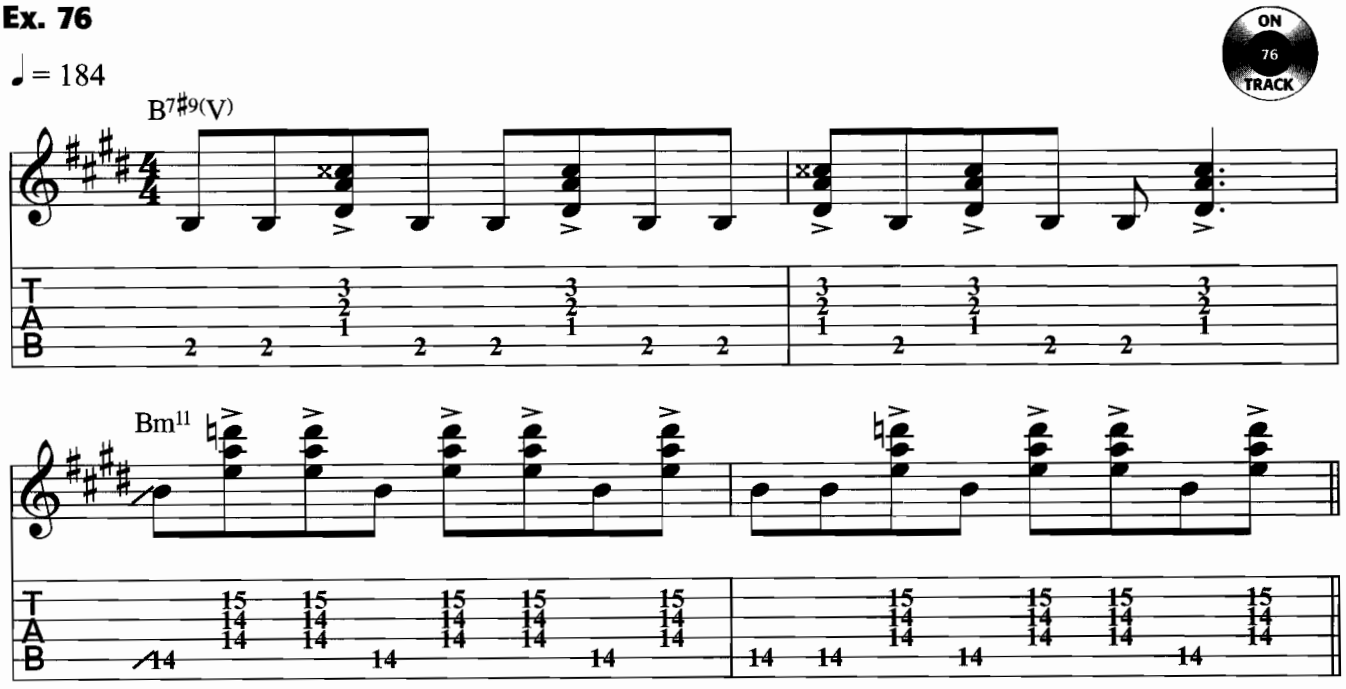
Applications: Play over bars 5–8 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Combined *E* pentatonic major and *E* pentatonic minor.

Example 76

Vaughan often extended the V chord over the last four bars (9–12) during his uptempo 12-bar blues improvisations, a technique gleaned from jazzers. The V-chord turnaround in Example 76 begins with a first-position *B7#9* chord split between its bass note and upper three voices. The bass-bass-chord sequence in bar 1 creates a momentary 3/8 hemiola, or three-against-two counter-rhythm. The first half of bar 2 shifts to alternating chord-bass action, while the second half reverts to a single eighth-note and chordal dotted quarter-note. The tension remains high in bars 3 and 4, which traditionally return to the I chord. Here, we jump to a fourteenth-position *Bm11* voicing built in stacked fourths, or quartal intervals. The rhythmic motif in both measures is derived from a drum rudiment called a reverse paradiddle.

Ex. 76



Tip: Tune down one half-step. This riff can multi-task as a rhythm figure or solo. Try picking it hybrid style using your pick on the bass notes and a middle-finger upstroke for the chords.

Suggested Accompaniment: You're playing it!

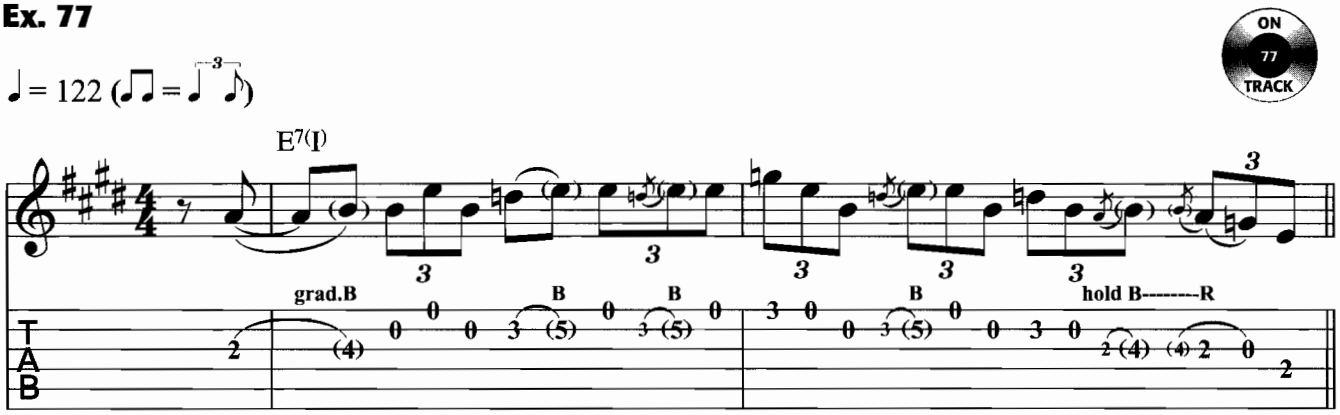
Applications: Play over bars 9–12 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *B7#9* chord tones (*B*, *D#*, *A*, *C##*, aka *D*) with an added 11 (E).

Example 77

This example illustrates the kind of open-position finger-twister SRV would lay over a variety of medium-tempo Texas shuffles, including the ones in Ex. 73a and Ex. 73b. This two-bar riff snakes through every note in a one-octave *E* pentatonic minor scale (*E*, *G*, *A*, *B*, *D*), plus its ♯9 (*G*). Anticipate the opening 4–5 bend on the "and" of beat *four*, and milk it gradually over the next beat. Note how the beats *one* and *two* in bar 1 rhythmically anticipate beats *three* and *four*, while bar 2 comprises an unbroken string of eighth-note triplets.

Ex. 77



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Transpose this riff to all "closed" keys. Try displacing it rhythmically by one beat in either direction.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 73a or Ex. 73b.

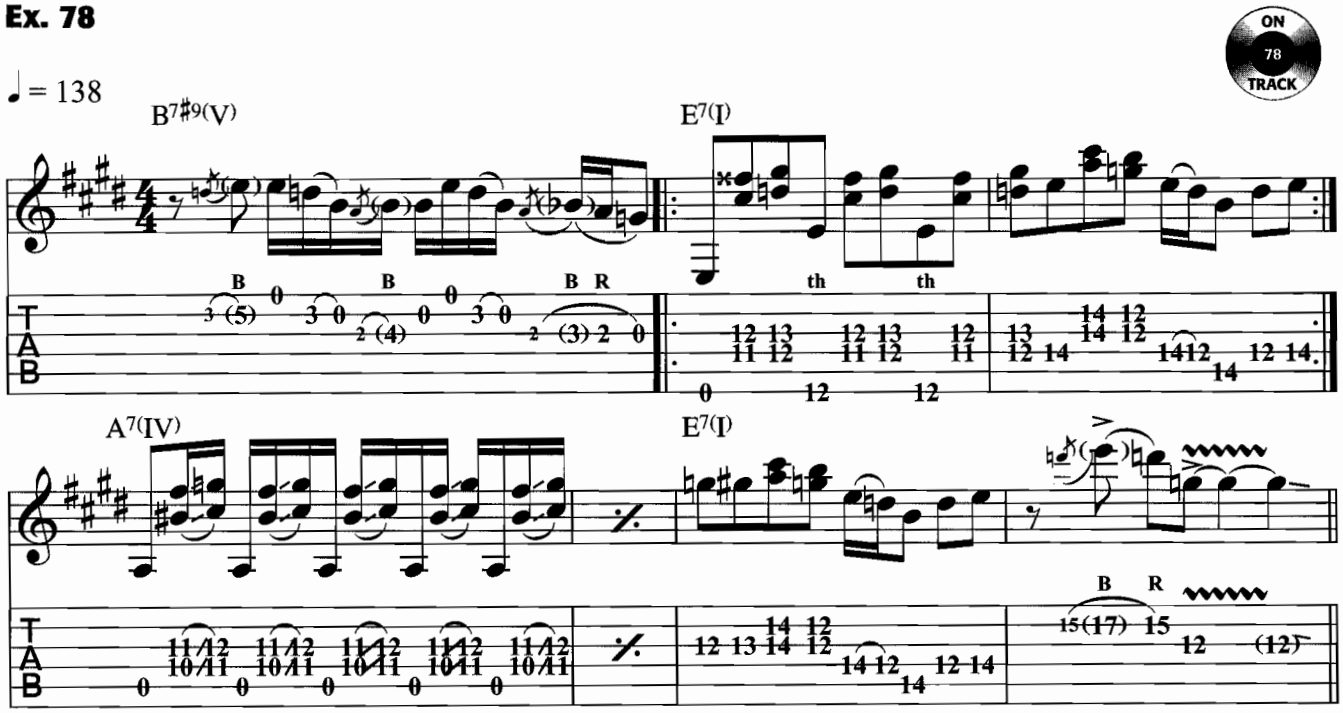
Applications: Play into and over bars 1–2, 2–3, 3–4, 7–8, or 11–12 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor.

Example 78

An open-position *E* blues lick similar to the one in Ex. 77 covers the V-chord lead-in to the rhythmic excursion in Ex. 78, a prime demonstration of Vaughan's signature shuttling between open or fretted bass notes and upper-register diads (two-note chords). We set up a 3/8 hemiola in bar 2 by alternating open and fretted *E*'s with a pair of chromatic flat-five intervals, or tritones, that invoke *E7* approached by its chromatic lower neighbor, *D#7*. Break out of this pattern on the "and" of beat *one* in bar 3 with an octave *E*, two double-stopped major-third intervals (beat *two*), and a cool eighth- and 16th-note lick on beats *three* and *four*. Repeat these two measures, then move on to the IV-chord riff in bar 4. Replace the previous *E*'s with open *A*'s and lower the chromatic tritones one half-step to lock into the *A7* chord. Beginning this 3/8 hemiola on beat *two* facilitates an easy, uninterrupted repeat in bar 5. The chromatic ♭3–3 (*G*–*G#*) move that kicks off bar 6 is new, but the remaining three beats are identical to those in bar 3. The cry of love in bar 7—a rhythmically delayed root bent and released to a quivering, syncopated ♭3/#9 (*G*)—channels pure Jimi. Yee-haw!

Ex. 78



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Adapt the IV-chord motif in bar 4 to the I and V chords, and ride the figure over an entire 12-bar blues progression. Use the chromatic tritones and low open *E* in bar 2 for the I chord. Raise these tritones one half-step to cover the V and alternate them with *B* at the fourteenth fret on the fifth string. Note how you can cover the I, IV, and V tritones—sans their chromatic neighbors—within a span of three frets.

Suggested Accompaniment: Moderate straight-eighth 12-bar blues-rock groove similar to Ex. 74 played at a slower tempo.

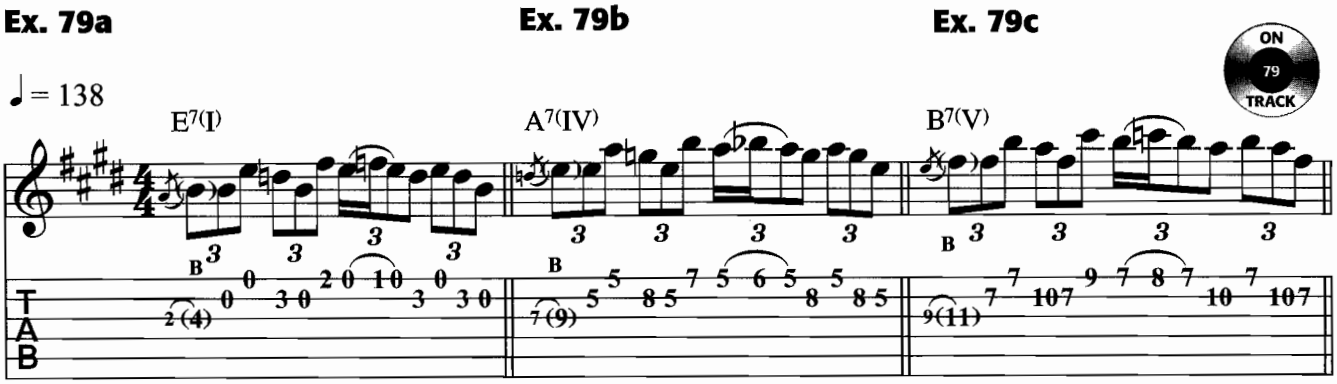
Applications: Play over bar 12 and into bars 1–8 in a slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* blues combined with *E* pentatonic major and chromatic passing tones.

Examples 79a–79c

This multi-part example illustrates an important and unique lick in SRV's vocabulary transposed to the I (Ex. 79a), IV (Ex. 79b), and V chords (Ex. 79c) in the key of *E*. All three feature an unlikely hammered-and-pulled ♭9—generally regarded as the most dissonant tone of the chromatic scale—over each chord of the moment—*F* with *E7*, *B♭* with *A7*, and *C* with *B7*. Let's check out the I-chord riff. Following a common T-Bone–style 5–5–root–♭7–5–9 motif (*B–B–E–D–B–F♯*), Vaughan tweaks Walker's signature 9 down a half-step before carrying on as usual. Things really get interesting if you analyze this lick against the *B* blues scale—you'll find all of its notes (excluding the ♭7) present and accounted for. In another unique twist, SRV had a penchant for simply playing parallel versions of this I-chord lick over the IV and V changes. Aside from switching from open to closed fingering, the IV- and V-chord licks in Ex. 79b and 79c are identical to Ex. 79a, albeit played in the fifth and seventh positions. Trust me, you'll be hearing more of this one.

Ex. 79a **Ex. 79b** **Ex. 79c**



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Try rephrasing the triplets in each example by using quarter-note displacement, i.e., beat *one* becomes beat *two*, beat *two* becomes beat *three*, etc. Hint: There are four possibilities if you don't reorder the triplets and twenty-four if you do.

Suggested Accompaniment: A wide variety of medium to uptempo Texas shuffles.

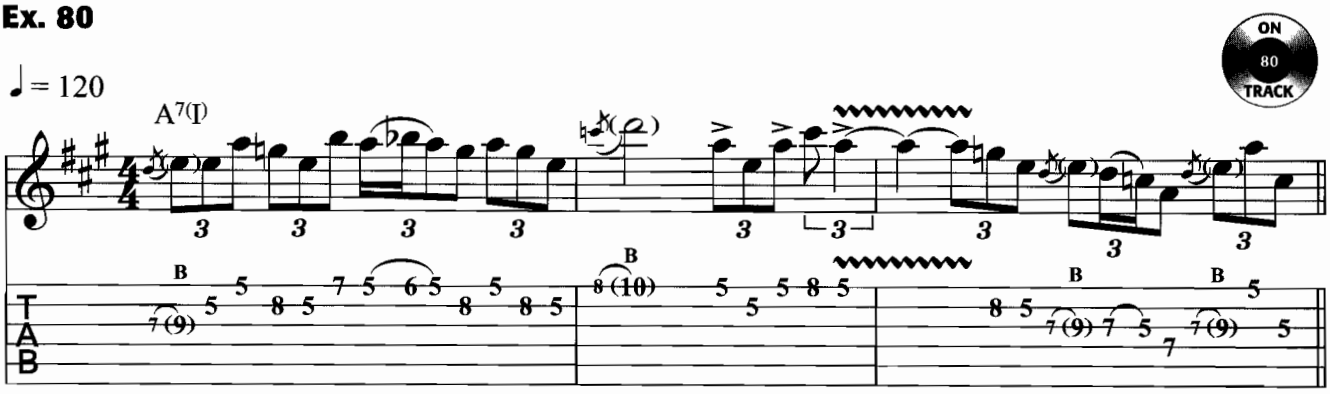
Applications: Incorporate into I-, IV-, and V-chord licks in a quick- or slow-change 12-bar *E* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor with added 9 (*F♯*) and ♭9 (*F*) for the I chord (Ex. 79a), A pentatonic minor with added 9 (*B*) and ♭9 (*B♭*) for the IV chord (Ex. 79b), and *B* pentatonic minor with added 9 (*C♯*) and ♭9 (*C*) for the V chord (Ex. 79c).

Example 80

This example puts the previous hammered-and-pulled ♭9 move to work over a tonic *A7* chord in a three-bar lick played entirely in fifth position. Though it functions as a I-chord lick here, you'll find that bar 1 is identical to the IV-chord lick in Ex. 79b. (You could also think of this as an *E* blues lick superimposed over *A7*.) A sustained half-note bend to the 4/11 (*D*) creates melodic tension during the first half of bar 2, while the broken and lopsided triplets over the next six beats emphasize rhythmic tension. The final triplet in bar 3 is another take on the Hendrix-y conclusion of Ex. 78 (transposed to *A*, of course).

Ex. 80



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Transpose bar 1 to *D7*—just move the entire lick up to tenth position—and play it over the IV change in bar 5 of the 12-bar progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: A variety of Texas shuffles à la "Pride and Joy" or "Cold Shot" (See Suggested Accompaniment, Ex. 81).

Applications: Play over bars 1–3 or 2–4 in a slow-change 12-bar *A* blues progression, or any part of bars 1–8 in an extended minor key Texas shuffle such as "Cold Shot" (See Ex. 81).
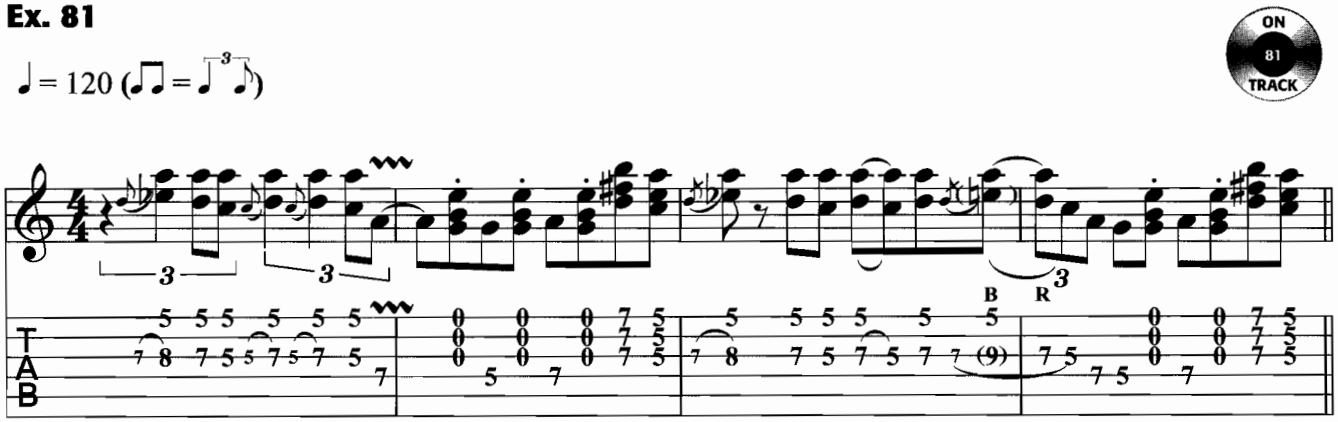
Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor with added 9 (*B*) and b9 (*B♭*).

Example 81

Jazzy Hammond-organ-flavored licks permeate the four-bar *A*-minor riff in Ex. 81. Clamp your index finger across the top three strings at the fifth fret to form a half barre, and lock down the recurring high-*A* pedal-tone in bars 1 and 3. You'll have to commit to one of two fingering options for the remaining notes; you can grab the 4 (*D*), the ♭5 (*E♭*), the 5 (*E*), the root and b7 (*G*) on the third and fourth strings with either your second or third finger. If you choose the latter, you'll have to bring your pinky into play to cover the 4–♭5 grace-note hammer-ons. Another available option is substituting a grace-note slide for the hammer-on. This allows you to play all of the notes not covered by the barre with your third finger. Of course, you can mix and match these fingerings any way you like. Hybrid pick-and-middle-finger picking seems to be the obvious choice, but you could also opt for a strictly fingerstyle thumb-and-index approach. If you really want to fatten things up, just add the already-barred second string to the mix and wail on all three strings with a pick.

Injecting a rhythm figure into every other bar of your solo guarantees a big sound. This power-trio-approved strategy creates a conversational, call-and-response flow as well as a sense of structure. The partial rhythm figure riff in bars 2 and 4 typifies one of SRV's favorite minor-key Texas shuffle grooves, complete with all-purpose open-string passing chords on every eighth-note upbeat (à la Ex. 73) and triple-stops on beat *four*. (I'd recommend half-barring the seventh fret your third finger.) Note how the licks in bars 1 and 3 extend across the bar line and creates a seamless transition to the rhythm figures in bars 2 and 4.

Ex. 81



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Blues progressions aren't always limited to a 12-bar form. Examples 81–84 were conceived during an extended improvisation over a 19-bar progression broken down as follows: Im (*Am7*) in bars 1–8, IVm (*Dm7*) in bars 9–10, Im in bars 11–12, IVm in bars 13–14, V7 in bar 15 (*E7♯9*), and Im in bars 16–19. Vaughan was known to shorten this progression to 17 bars during his extended solo by lopping off two bars of the Im chord at the end.

Suggested Accompaniment: None required, but you could convert the relentless riff in bars 2 and 4 into a full-fledged rhythm figure. Simply extract the riff in bar 2 (minus its opening tie) and you can employ it as a rhythmic accompaniment for this and the following three examples. Listen to "Cold Shot."

Applications: Play over bars 1–4 or 5–8 in an extended 17- or 19-bar minor-key Texas shuffle such as "Cold Shot." You can also play this lick over bars 16–19 in the 19-bar version.

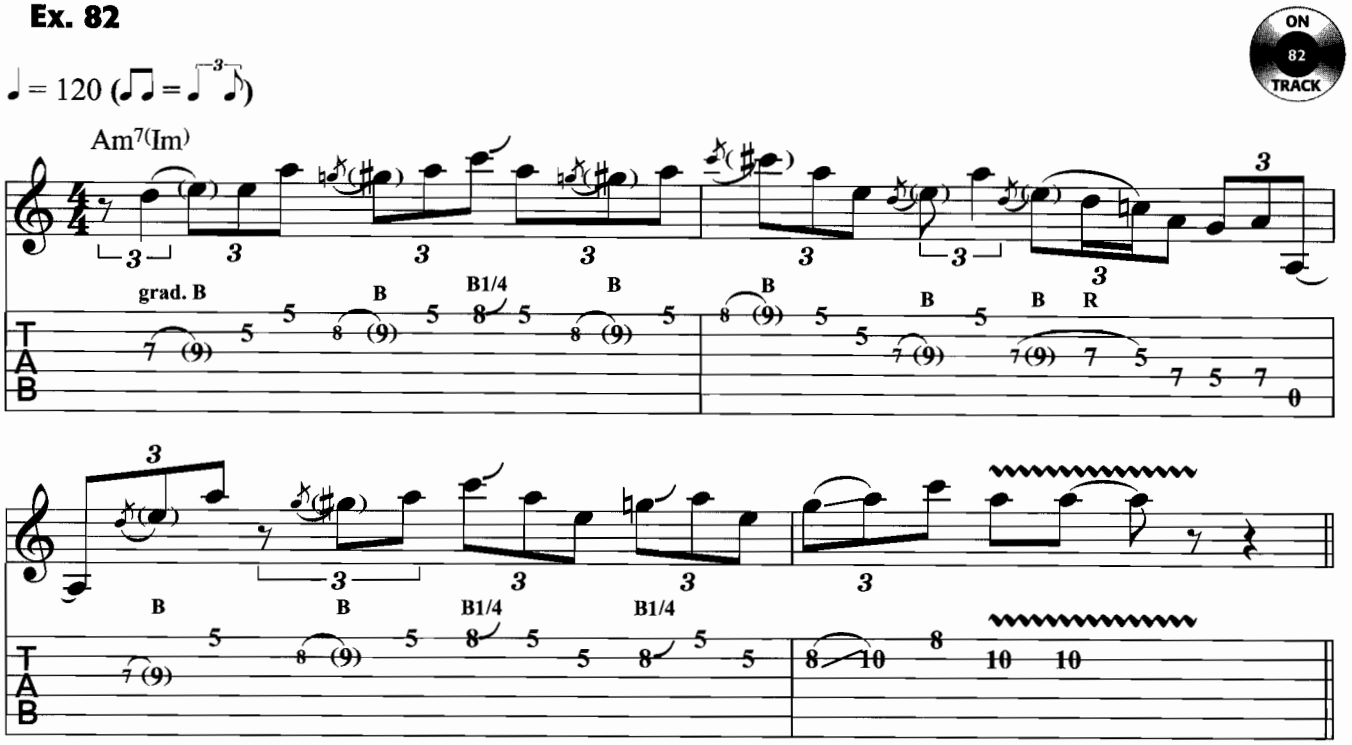
Scale Sources: *A* blues with added 6 (*F♯*) and 9 (*B*) plus all-purpose open-string passing chords.

Example 82

The rolling barrage of eighth-note triplets in Ex. 82 combines spot-on whole-step bends with T-Bone's half-step string smears. This four-bar Im lick, which begins on the second eighth-note of the opening triplet, fits the Texas shuffle from Ex. 81 like a glove. Essentially, the bending action falls into three categories: Whole-step 4–5 (*D–E*) bends played on the third string, half-step ♭7–7 (*G–G♯*) bends played on the second string, and quarter-step microtonal bends from the ♭3/♯9 (*C*) played on the first string.

Bars 1–3 are locked into the fifth-position *A* blues box, while a third-finger ♭7–root (*G–A*) slide taxis us into eighth position for bar 4.

Ex. 82



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Try playing this example over different parts of the 17- or 19-bar "Cold Shot" progression (See Ex. 81).

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 81.

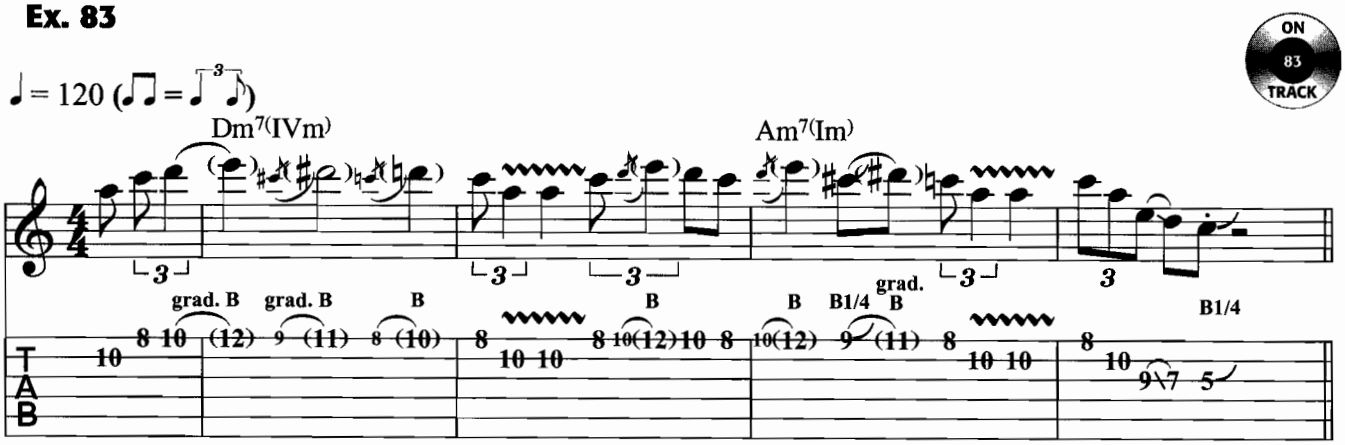
Applications: Same as Ex. 81.

Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor with added 3 (*C♯*) and 7 (*G♯*) passing tone.

Example 83

The SRV-approved Texas shuffle licks in Ex. 83 pack a slew of Albert King–style bends into a four-bar IVm–Im (*Dm7–Am7*) progression. The ground rules for these chromatically descending bends are quite simple: Play all 10th-fret bends with your third finger, all 9th-fret bends with your second finger, and all 8th-fret bends with your first finger. Nonetheless, pulling these off convincingly will take considerable practice. Rhythmically, the offset triplets in the pickup and bars 2–3 steal the show. Be sure to milk the gradual bends in bars 1 and 3 for an entire whole-step, and don't forget to keep a continuous vibrato going over the doubled-up *A*'s in bars 2 and 3. The sweet-and-sour whole-step bend on beat *two* in bar 3 begins with the *C♯* pre-bent a quarter-tone. Hang in the eighth position for the descending second-inversion *A* minor arpeggio on the downbeat of bar 4—a classic Otis Rush move—then use your second finger to slide into fifth position on beat *two*.

Ex. 83



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Transpose the "Cold Shot" rhythm figure derived from bar 2 of Ex. 81 to the tenth position to cover the IVm (*Dm7*) when comping underneath this lick.

Suggested Accompaniment: Use the transposed IVm figure derived from bar 2 of Ex. 81 for *Dm7*, and same Im figure as Ex. 81 and Ex. 82 for *Am7*.

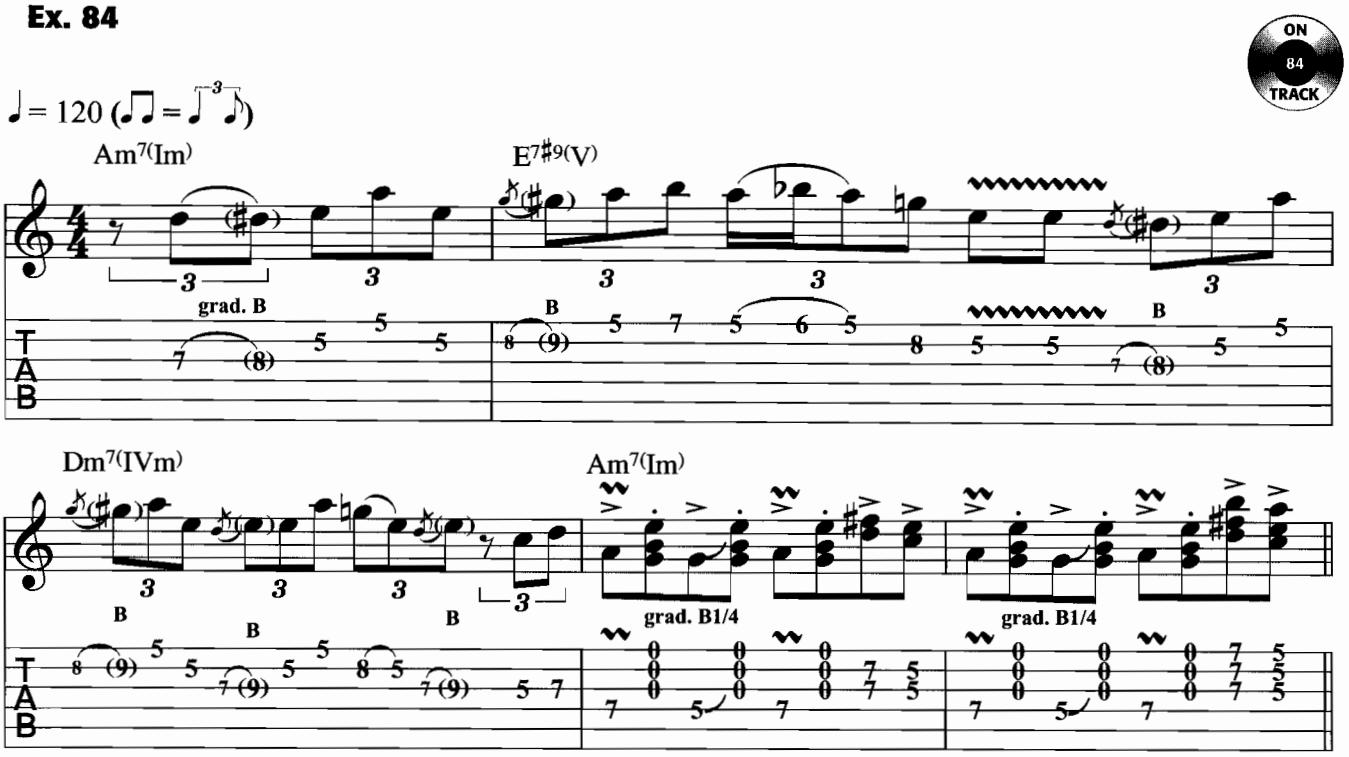
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in the 17- or 19-bar "Cold Shot" progression (see Ex. 81).

Scale Sources: *A* blues with added 3 (*C♯*).

Example 84

Vaughan often injected a standard 12-bar chorus into his extended solos during odd-numbered 17- or 19-bar Texas shuffle progressions. Example 84 depicts one such moment. We're in fifth position playing into the V chord (*E7♯9*) over a standard four-bar V–IVm–Im minor-key turnaround. Note the gradual half-step bend in the pickup and the revision of the IV-chord lick from Ex. 79b—played here over an *E7♯9* V chord—as we move into bar 1. More T-Bone triplets decorate the IVm change in bar 2, and, finally, the complete "Cold Shot"–style rhythm figure emerges in bars 3 and 4, first utilizing double-stops and then triple-stops on the fourth beat of each measure. The origin of this minor-key Texas shuffle figure—possibly traceable back to Hound Dog Taylor—remains uncertain, but SRV certainly gave it mass exposure.

Ex. 84



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Isolate and repeat bars 4 and 5 to form a killer Texas shuffle rhythm figure. Transpose as necessary and apply it to the 17- and 19-bar "Cold Shot" progression described in Ex. 81.

Suggested Accompaniment: Play the V chord (*E7♯9*) on the first two eighth-notes of the triplets on beats *one* and *three*, and as quarter-notes on beats *three* and *four*. Use the same IVm (*Dm7*) figure from Ex. 83.
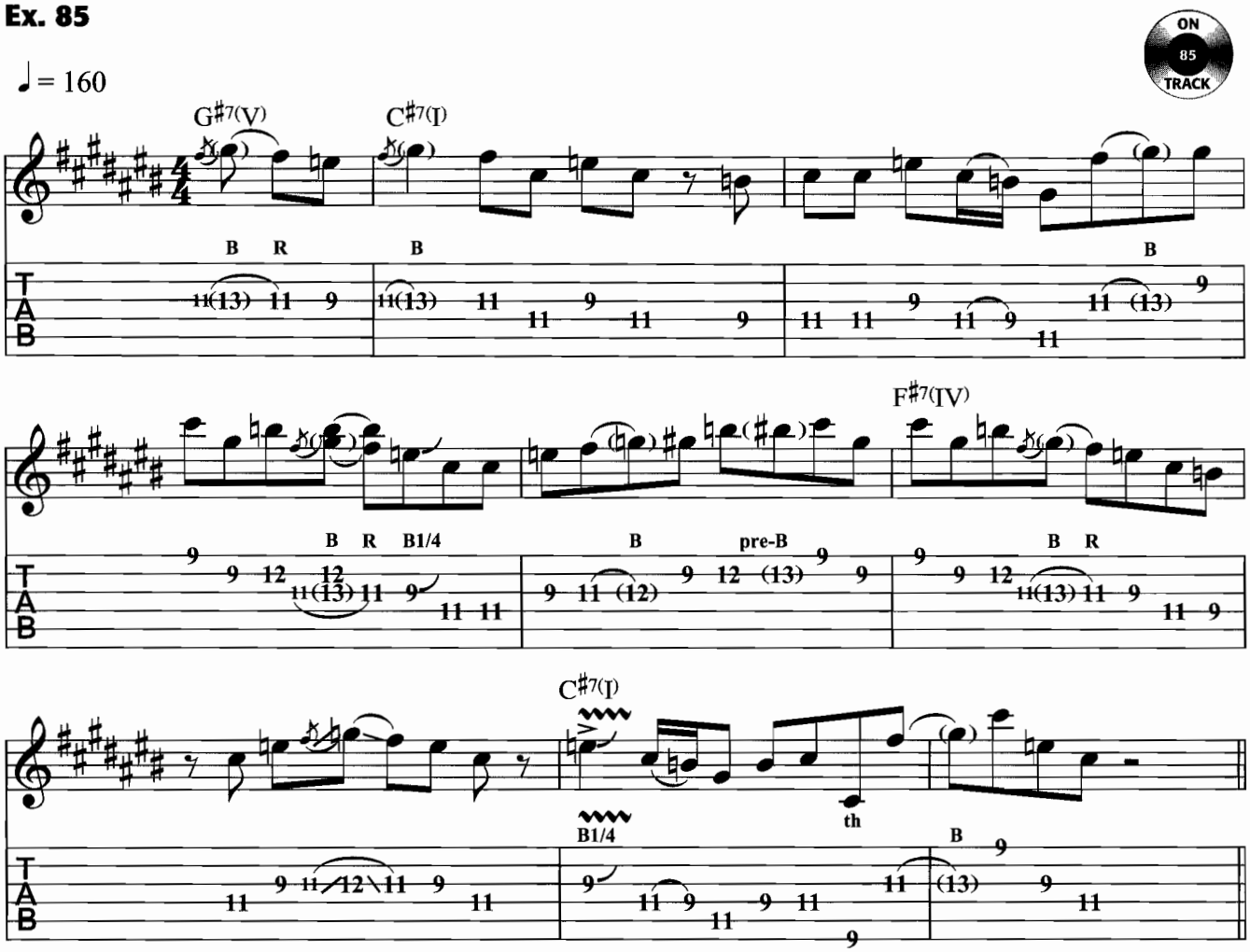
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a standard 12-bar *A* minor blues progression.

Scale Sources: *A* blues with added 7 (*G♯*), 9 (*B*), ♭9 (*B♭*), and 6 (*F♯*).

Example 85

Culled from a live jam with brother Jimmie, Ex. 85 covers the first eight bars of a standard 12-bar *C♯* blues progression and illustrates how SRV effortlessly adapted his triplet-based runs to accommodate a straight eighth- and 16th-note feel. (Remember, we're tuned down one half-step, so playing in *C♯* actually yields the concert key of *C*. Check Ex. 71 and Ex. 72 and you'll find that Jimmie Vaughan is playing the same song in the key of *C*.) You can lock and load in the ninth position *C♯* blues box and stay put for the duration. High points include the call-and-response phrasing in bars 1–4, an oblique bend-and-release maneuver in bar 3, a pre-bent 7 (*B♯*) used as a chromatic passing tone in bar 4, jazzy half-step slurs in bar 6 that mimic the whole-step bend and release in the previous measure, and the particularly Hendrix-y wrap-up—complete with a heavily vibrated ♭3/♯9 (*E*) and thumb-fretted *C♯* root—in bars 7 and 8.

Ex. 85



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Try shifting the licks in this example to different parts of the 12-bar progression. For instance, you could play the entire example into and over bars 5–12.

Suggested Accompaniment: New Orleans–style blues rumba in *C♯*. (See Ex. 71 and Ex. 72 for details.) Listen to "You Were Wrong."

Applications: Play into and over bars 1–8 in a slow-change 12-bar *C♯* blues progression.

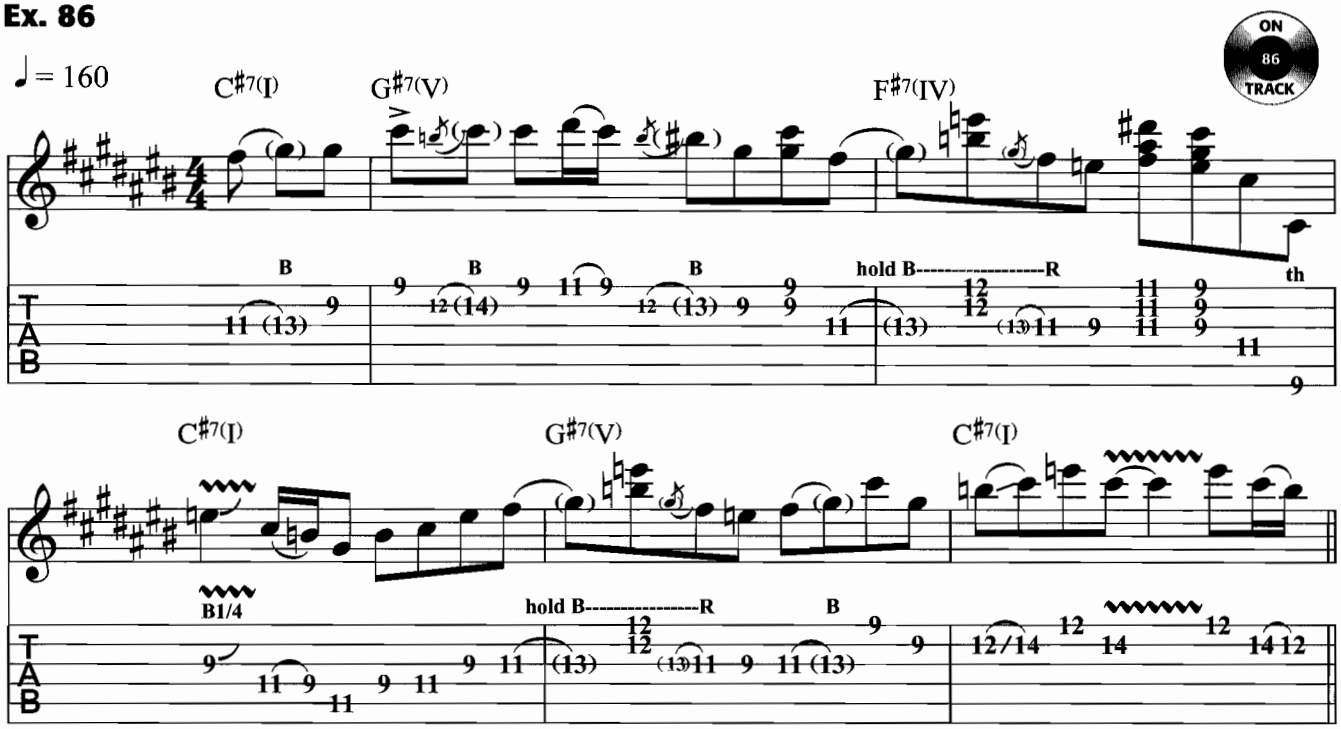
Scale Sources: *C♯* blues with added 7 (*B♯*) passing tone.

Example 86

Another excerpt from the "You Were Wrong" jam, Ex. 86 navigates the song's four-bar V–IV–I–V turnaround and begins a new chorus. While the open lick recalls T-Bone, the held bend, pinky-fretted 12th-fret double-stops, grace-note release, triple-stops, thumb-fretted *C♯* root, and heavily vibrated ♭3/♯9

(*E*) in bar 2 are, once again, pure Hendrix. The motif from bar 2 reappears over the V chord (*G#7*) in bar 4, albeit with a different ending. We end on bar 1 of a fresh 12-bar chorus with a third-finger slide up the *B* string to the twelfth position. Take it!

Ex. 86



Tip: Did I mention that you should tune down one half-step? You can tag this example onto the end of Ex. 85 to form a complete 12-bar solo.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 85 adapted to the V, IV, and I chords (See Ex. 71 and Ex. 72).

Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 and bar 1 of the following chorus in a slow-change 12-bar *C#* blues progression.

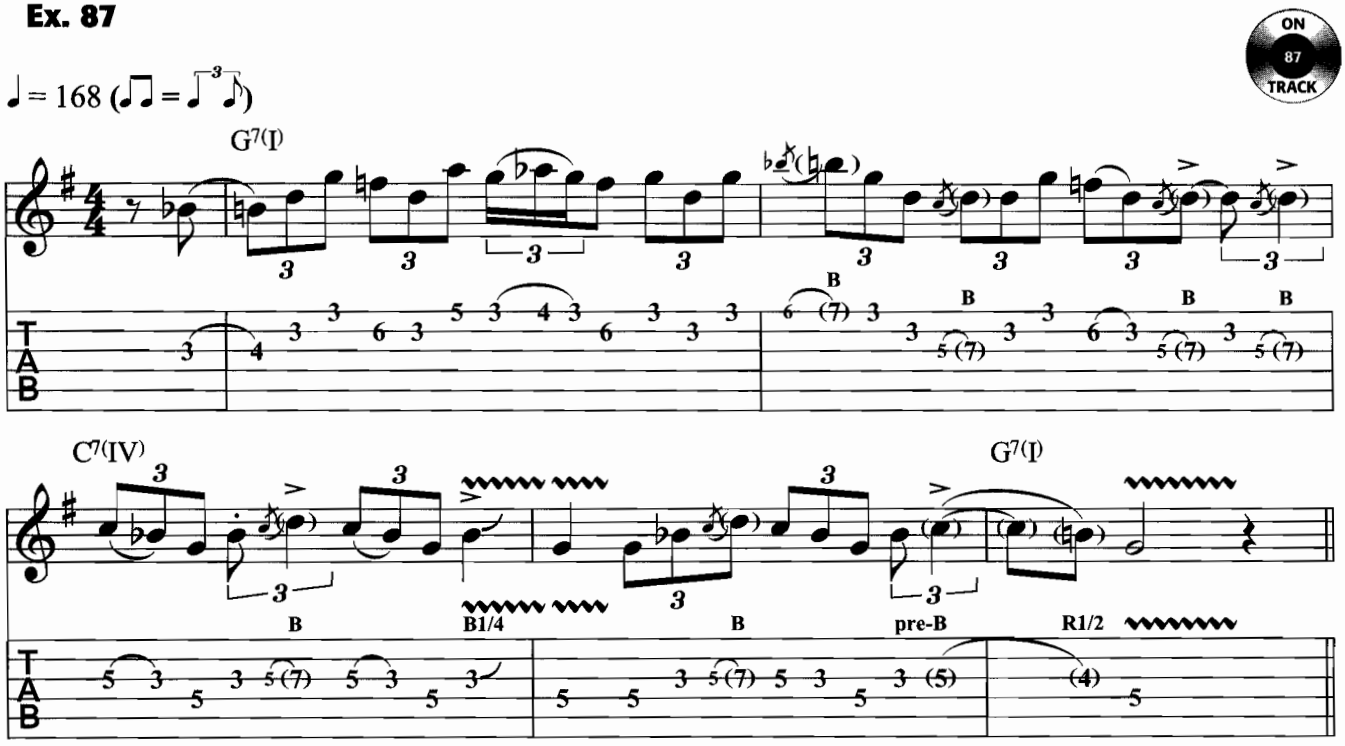
Scale Sources: *C#* blues with added 6 (*A#*) and 9 (*D#*) plus added 7 (*B#*) passing tone.

Example 87

"Hawaiian Eye," a standard encore jam during SRV's 1989 tour with Jeff Beck, provides the fast shuffle groove for the flurry of triplets in Ex. 87. We begin with a slight variation of the signature lick profiled in Ex. 79, transposed to the third-position *G* blues box to cover the I chord. In sharp contrast, bar 2 begins with a decidedly major half-step bend to the 3 (*B*). Stuttering eighth-to-quarter-note triplet groupings spice up the IV-chord change in bars 3 and 4. The pre-bent 4 (*C*) that crosses from bar 4

into bar 5 originates from the third fret, as does the understandably Beck-flavored half-step release to the 3 that coincides perfectly with the return to the I chord. A heavily vibrated *G* root punctuates the proceedings.

Ex. 87



Tip: Tune down one half-step. Isolate the whole-step-bend/half-step-release move that crosses between the last two bars and adapt it to other registers and keys. It's a good 'un!

Suggested Accompaniment: Moderately fast 12-bar shuffle. Play appropriate I-chord (*C7* or *C9*) and IV-chord (*C7* or *C9*) voicings on beat *one* and the "and" of beat *two*.

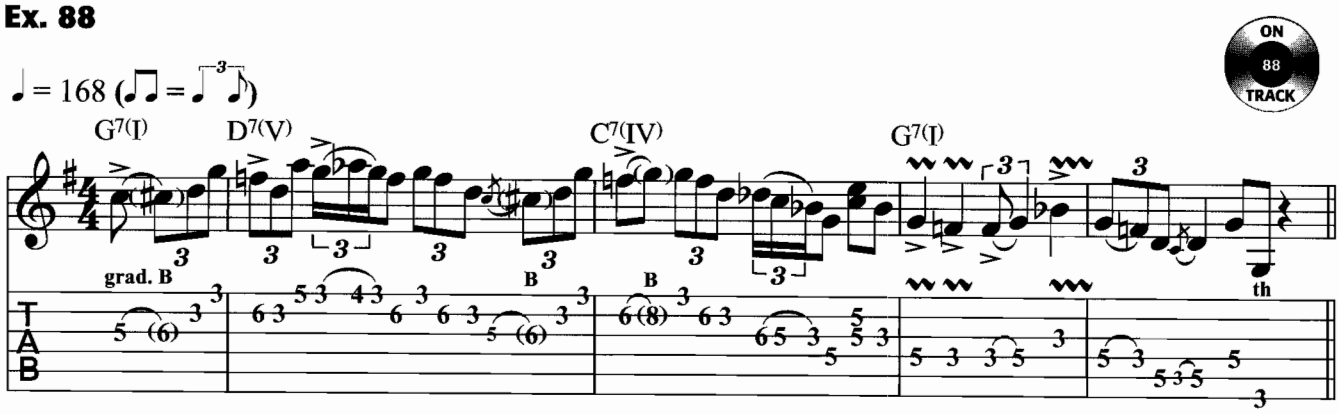
Applications: Play into and over bars 3–7 in a slow-change 12-bar *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* pentatonic minor with added 3 (*B*), 9 (*A*), and ♭9 (*A*♭).

Example 88

Continuing in the "Hawaiian Eye" groove, Ex. 88 covers the tune's four-bar turnaround beginning with yet another adaptation of Vaughan's signature hammered-and-pulled ♭9 motif from Ex. 79, Ex. 80, and Ex. 87. The pickups into bars 1 and 2 differ by only one note; the first one utilizes a gradual half-step rhythmic bend, while the second features a grace-note bend. In bar 2, SRV once again proves that a simple one-octave descending *G* blues scale can sound tough as nails. Decorate the quarter-notes in bar 3 with copious vibrato, and grab the final low *G* with your thumb. Surf's up, Texas-style!

Ex. 88



Tip: Tune down one half-step.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 87 adapted to V–IV–I turnaround.

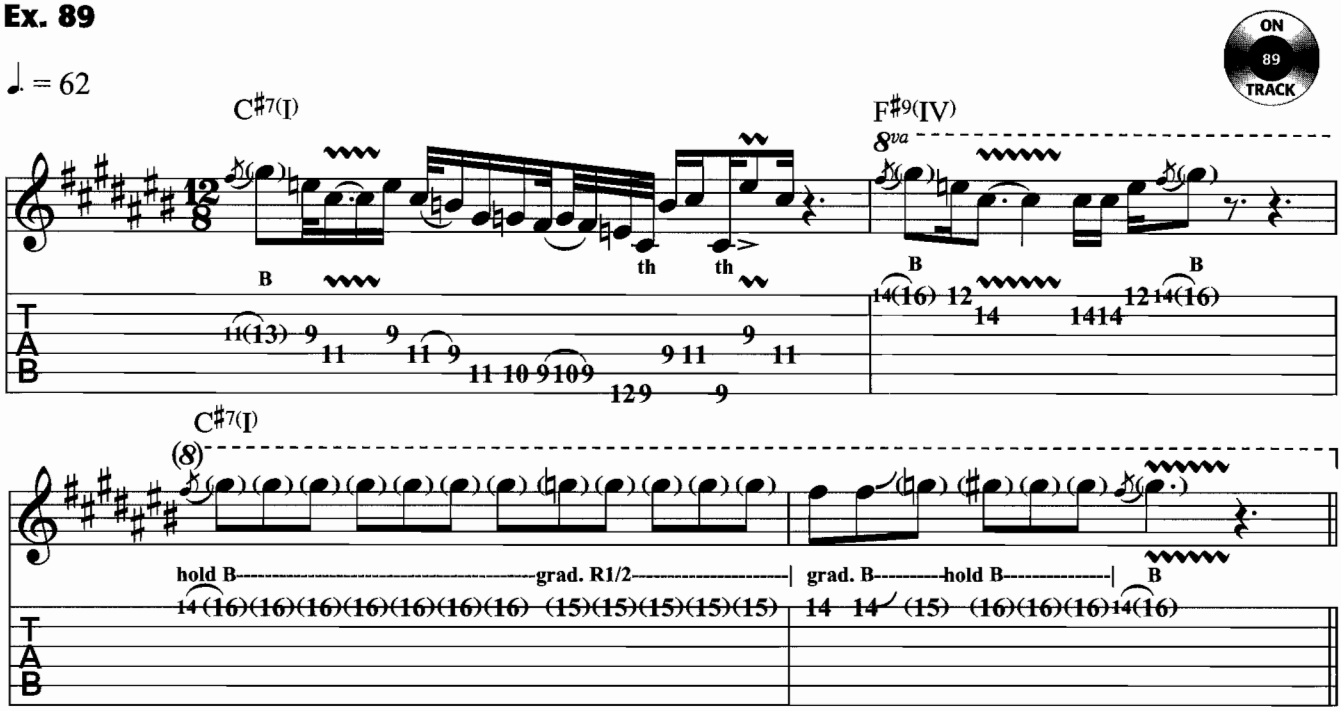
Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a slow-change 12-bar *G* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G* blues with added 9 (*A*), ♭9 (*A*♭), and 6 (*E*).

Example 89

We'll wrap up our SRV segment with a trio of 12/8 slow-blues excerpts. As with most busy 12/8 phrases, these become easier to read when you think of each measure as four bars of 3/8. The ninth-position Three Kings lick

Ex. 89



on beat *one* leads into a rapid series of descending syncopations during the first two eighth-notes in beat *two* followed by four 32nd-notes on the third eighth-note, and more octave-jumping syncopations on beat *three*. Be sure to fret those low *C*'s with your thumb—you can definitely hear the difference. The twelfth-position IV-chord lick in bar 2 is sparse by comparison. And, rhythmically speaking, bars 3 and 4 are a breeze. The hard part is gradually releasing the 4–5 (*F♯–G♯*) bend and re-bending back to the 5. Practice this move until it sounds smooth, uninterrupted, and natural. The trick is to not worry about specific pitches while you gradually release and re-bend—just target the complete release to *F♯* on the downbeat of bar 4 and the re-bend to *G♯* on beat *two*.

Tip: Tune down one half-step. Remember, you can also cut the dotted-quarter count in half and double the note values by thinking of each beat as a measure of 3/4.

Suggested Accompaniment: Quick-change 12-bar slow 12/8 blues progression in *G♯*. Comp appropriate I-chord (*G♯7* or *G♯9*) and IV-chord (*F♯7* or *F♯9*) voicings as follows: Dotted-quarter-note on beat *one*; staccato quarter-note followed by half-step chromatic neighbor chord on the last eighth-note (*C7* or *D7* for I and *E7* or *G7* for IV), dotted half-note on beats *three* and *four*.

Applications: Play over bars 1–4 in a quick-change 12-bar slow blues progression in *G♯*.

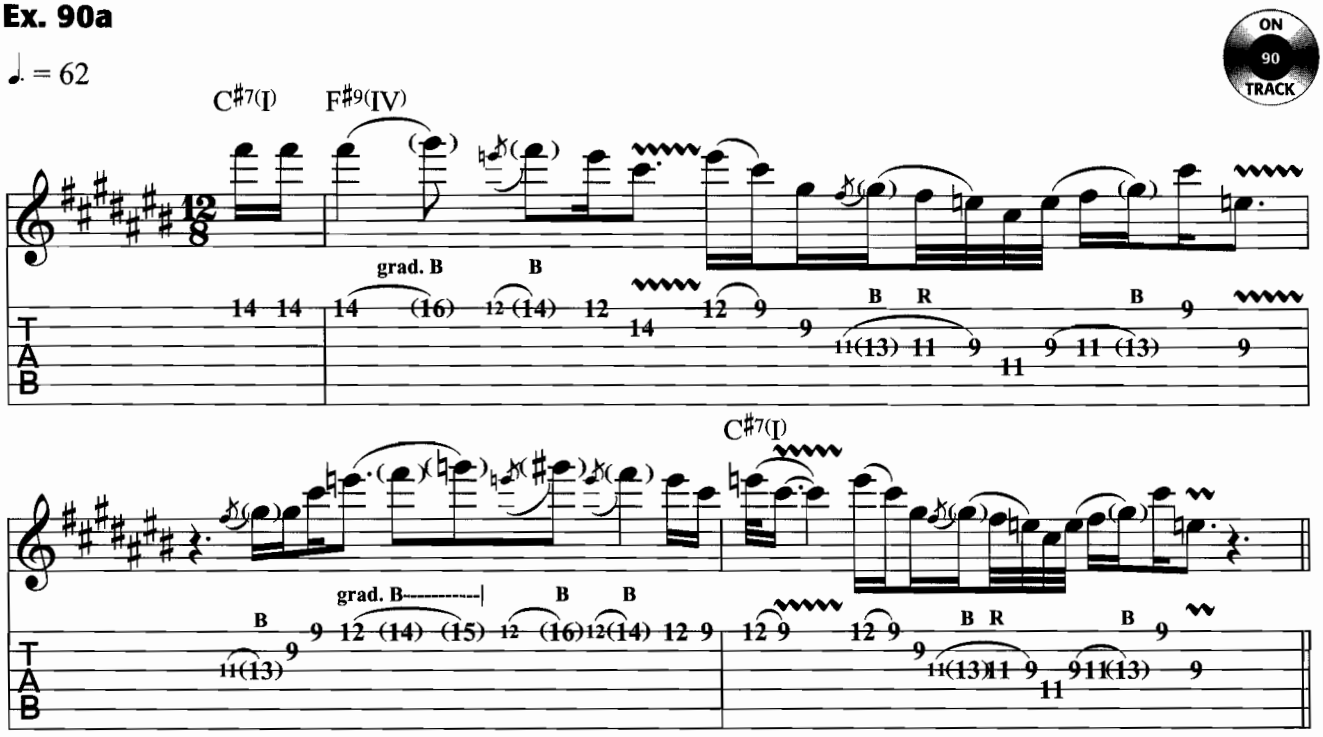
Scale Sources: *G♯* blues with added microtonal passing tones.

Examples 90a–90b

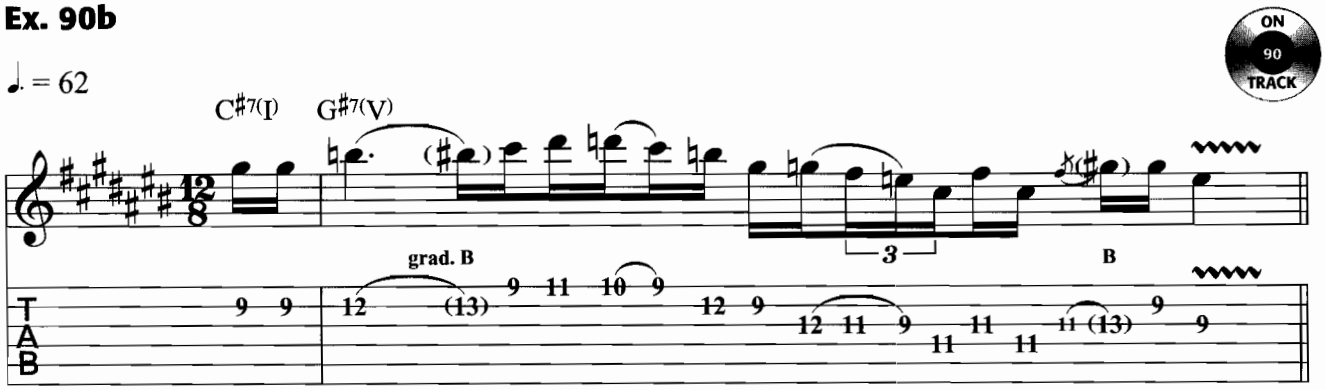
In Ex. 90a, we play into and over the IV–I change beginning with some wailing twelfth-position Albert King–style phrases in bar 1. Again, isolating and doubling the value of each beat will make this seemingly complex lick much easier to comprehend. Shift into ninth-position Hendrix mode for the crammed run that begins halfway through the measure, and wait one beat as you enter bar 2. You'll need to rechannel King to achieve the extended one-and-a-half- and two-step bends during beat *three*. We rejoin the I chord and the spirit of Jimi in bar 3 with a rhythmically displaced reprise of the lick from the second half of bar 1.

Though it's well disguised, you should recognize the move on beat *two* in Ex. 90b, our final SRV riff. It's another variation of the signature lick we introduced back in Ex. 79, but with a twist. This time there's no hammer-pull action or triplet involved—just a straight chromatic descent from the 9 to the root (*D♯–D–C♯*). Coupled with the bopping blues run on the last two beats, this V-chord lick could have just as easily rolled off the Hammond keyboards of Jimmy Smith or Brother Jack McDuff. Take it away, brothers and sisters—the turnaround is all yours!

Ex. 90a



Ex. 90b



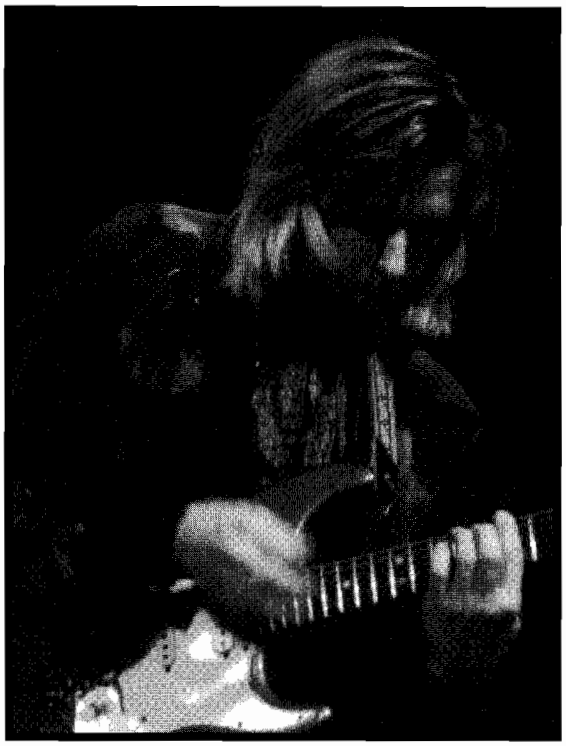
Tip: Tune down one half-step. You can connect the last three licks to form three quarters of a 12-bar solo chorus. (Like I said, the turnaround is all yours.) Try displacing these licks to different parts of the 12-bar progression, and, as always, transpose them to all keys and registers so you can drop them into your next blues jam at will.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 89 adapted to IV–I and V chords.

Applications: Example 90a: Play into and over bars 4–6 in a quick-change 12-bar *C♯* blues progression. Example 90b: Play into and over bar 9 or bar 12 in a quick-change 12-bar *C♯* blues progression.

Scale Sources: Ex. 90a: *C♯* blues. Ex 90b: *C♯* blues with added 9 (*D♯*) plus ♭9 (*D*) and 7 (*B♯*) passing tones.

Eric Johnson



Profile

Born: August 17, 1954, in Austin, Texas.

Guitars: Vintage 1954, 1957, 1958, and 1961 Fender Stratocasters; Fender Eric Johnson Signature Stratocasters; Gibson 1964 SG Standard, ES-335, 1958 ES-175, Custom Shop 1959 Les Paul, Firebird I, and Flying V; Vincent Bell Coral Electric Sitar.

Amps: 1968 50-watt Marshall Tremolo head modified with 6L6 power tubes, various Marshall 50- and 100-watt '60s "plexi" heads, 1966 blackface Fender Twin Reverbs, blackface Fender Deluxe, blackface Fender Vibroverb, Dumble custom, vintage Marshall 4x12 speaker cabinets loaded with 25-watt green-back Celestions, angled-top Marshall 4x12 loaded with 30-watt G12H Celestions.

Effects: Late-'60s Dallas-Arbiter Fuzz Face, late-'60s Italian-made Vox CryBaby wah, T.C. Electronic Stereo Chorus Flanger, '80s BK Butler Tube Driver with Yugoslavian 12AX7, MXR Flanger/Doubler, Lexicon MPX500, Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man, Line 6 Echo Pro Studio Modeler, Korg DRV3000, T.C. Electronic 2290 Digital Delay.

Prime Cuts: "Cliffs of Dover," "High Landrons," "Steve's Boogie," "Trademark," "Zap."

Recommended Albums: *Tones*, Warner Bros.; *Ah Via Musicom*, *Venus Isle*, both on Capitol; *Live from Austin, Texas*, New West); *Bloom*, Favored Nations.

Video/DVD: *Eric Johnson: Live from Austin TX*, New West; *Total Electric Guitar*, Hot Licks.

Influences: T-Bone Walker, Johnny Winter, Chet Atkins, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Wes Montgomery, Django Reinhardt, Miles Davis, Bill Conners, John McLaughlin, Steve Morse.

Influenced: Billy Gibbons, Steve Morse, Johnny Winter, Jeff Baxter, Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, many others.

The Players Say...

"When I heard Eric he was only 16, and I remember wishing that I could have played like that at that age."

– Johnny Winter

(www.modernguitars.com/stratcollector.com)

"Eric Johnson is amazing. This might sound silly, but if Jimi Hendrix had gone on to study with Howard Roberts for about eight years, you'd have what this kid strikes me as."

– Jeff "Skunk" Baxter

(www.modernguitars.com/stratcollector.com)

"Eric has more colorful tone in his fingers than Van Gogh had on his palette."

– Steve Vai

(www.modernguitars.com/stratcollector.com)

"There are a lot of different exercises that people can use to try to center their selves, if for no other reason than to try to address the continual battle in everybody's life. We try to center ourselves with dignity, poise, serenity, and peacefulness. The more we can get into that flow, the more we do whatever we do better."

– Eric Johnson

(*Guitar Player*, March 1990)

"Just try to follow your heart and try to play music that really passionately inspires you. Tape yourself, listen to what you're doing and try to be discerning about what you're doing. Try to improve your playing, but in a way that musically makes sense, not necessarily technically makes sense. You might want to break the rules and rewrite the book, but make sure it makes great music and inspires you. If it inspires you, it will probably inspire somebody else. Also, find people that resonate with the same visions you have. You might go out and play a gig where there are only three people, but that doesn't matter because next time there will be four people and so on. Just keep at it and don't put the emphasis or the validity of what you do on whether people say you're good or not, except for the people who are sitting there listening to you. Are you turning them on? Don't worry about what a record label says or the business thing per se, because you end up chasing the carrot and all of a sudden you've spent your whole life chasing the carrot."

– Eric Johnson

(www.gibson.com)

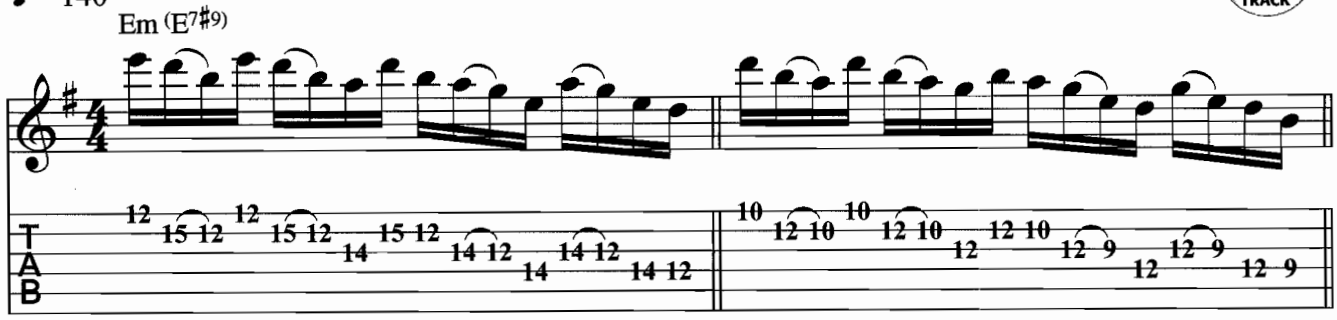
Eric Johnson–style Licks

Example 91a–91e

A master of pentatonic playing, Johnson is fond of sequencing the five-note scale into various numerical groupings within his blues-rock improvisations. The representative sequences in this multi-part example can be viewed from several perspectives. Each one maintains the same motif relative to its parent pentatonic minor scale beginning on a different descending scale step, so let's begin by decoding Ex. 91a. I find it easiest to split this motif in half; think of it as a pair of descending four-note sequences—root–♭7–5–root (*E–D–B–E*) and ♭7–5–4–♭7 (*D–B–A–D*)—followed by two simple descending-scale runs built from each successive *E* pentatonic minor scale tone. Closer inspection reveals descending groups of three, four, five, and four 16th-notes. Accenting the first note in each of these groupings will offset the predictability of these sequences. Feel free to add or delete pull-offs as you see fit.

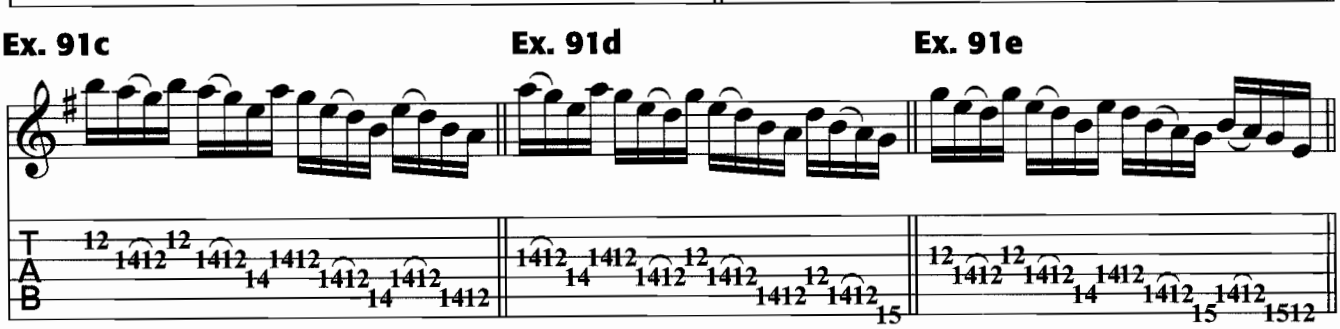
The next four sequences follow suit by utilizing the same pattern beginning on each descending *E* pentatonic minor scale tone; Ex. 91b starts on the ♭7 (*D*), Ex. 91c on the 5 (*B*), Ex. 91d on the 4 (*A*), and Ex. 91e on the ♭3 (*G*). Though Ex. 91b is notated in the tenth position, you could easily opt to remain in twelfth position. As an alternative, try dropping each example to the next adjacent *E* pentatonic minor scale pattern. This approach will take you through all five connecting finger patterns.

Ex. 91a



Ex. 91b





Ex. 91c

Ex. 91d

Ex. 91e

Tip: Play all five examples in succession to create an extended five-bar sequence. Since *E* minor is relative to *G* major, all of these examples can also function as *G* pentatonic major licks. Additionally, you can play them over other diatonic harmonies to create *C* Lydian and *A* Dorian modal sounds. Experiment with your own sequences based on the concepts illustrated in these examples.

Suggested Accompaniment: These sequences work over a wide variety of grooves and harmonic backdrops.

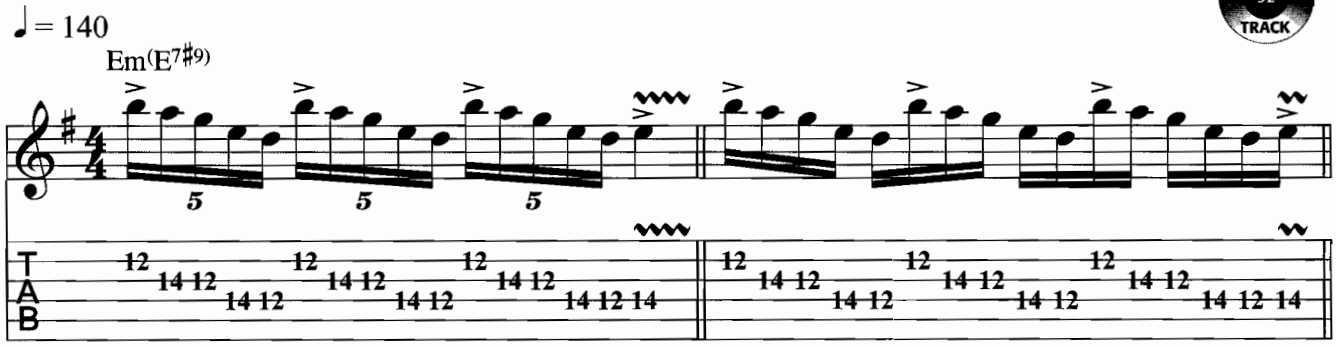
Applications: Play over any measure or measures in a 12-bar *E* blues progression, or over static *Em* or *E7#9* vamps.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor, *G* pentatonic major, *C* Lydian, *A* Dorian.

Example 92a–92d

Other Johnson-esque phrasing techniques include repetitive, odd-numbered pentatonic groupings such as the twelfth-position quintuplets in Ex. 92a, and their adaptation to 16th-notes grouped in fives, as shown in Ex. 92b. Example 92c adds pull-offs for a more legato feel and extends the sequence to include an additional octave played primarily in the fifth position. With a few simple alterations, this lick can be modified and customized to produce variations such as the one shown in Ex. 92d. Again, add or delete pull-offs at will.

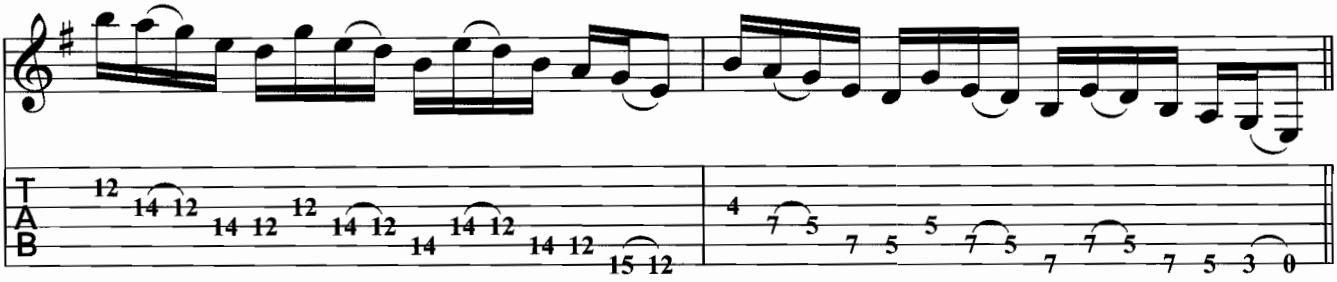
Ex. 92a



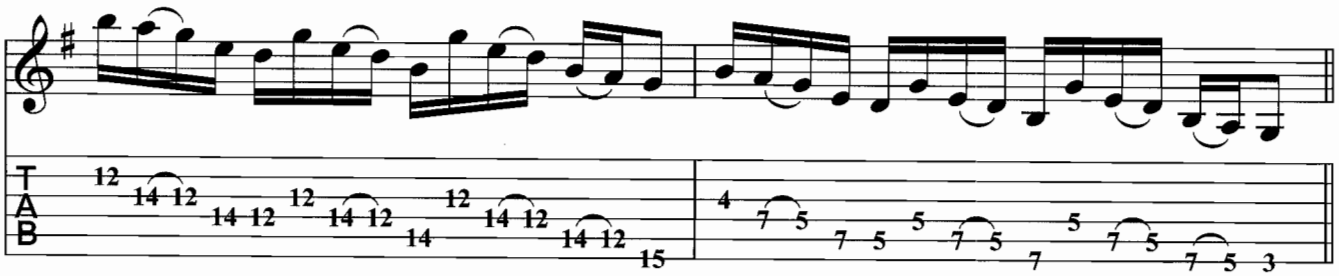
Ex. 92b



Ex. 92c



Ex. 92d



Tip: As in Ex. 91, all of these examples can also function as *C* pentatonic major licks. Additionally, you can play them these over other diatonic harmonies to create *C* Lydian and *A* Dorian modal sounds. Experiment with your own sequences based on the concepts illustrated in these examples.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 91.

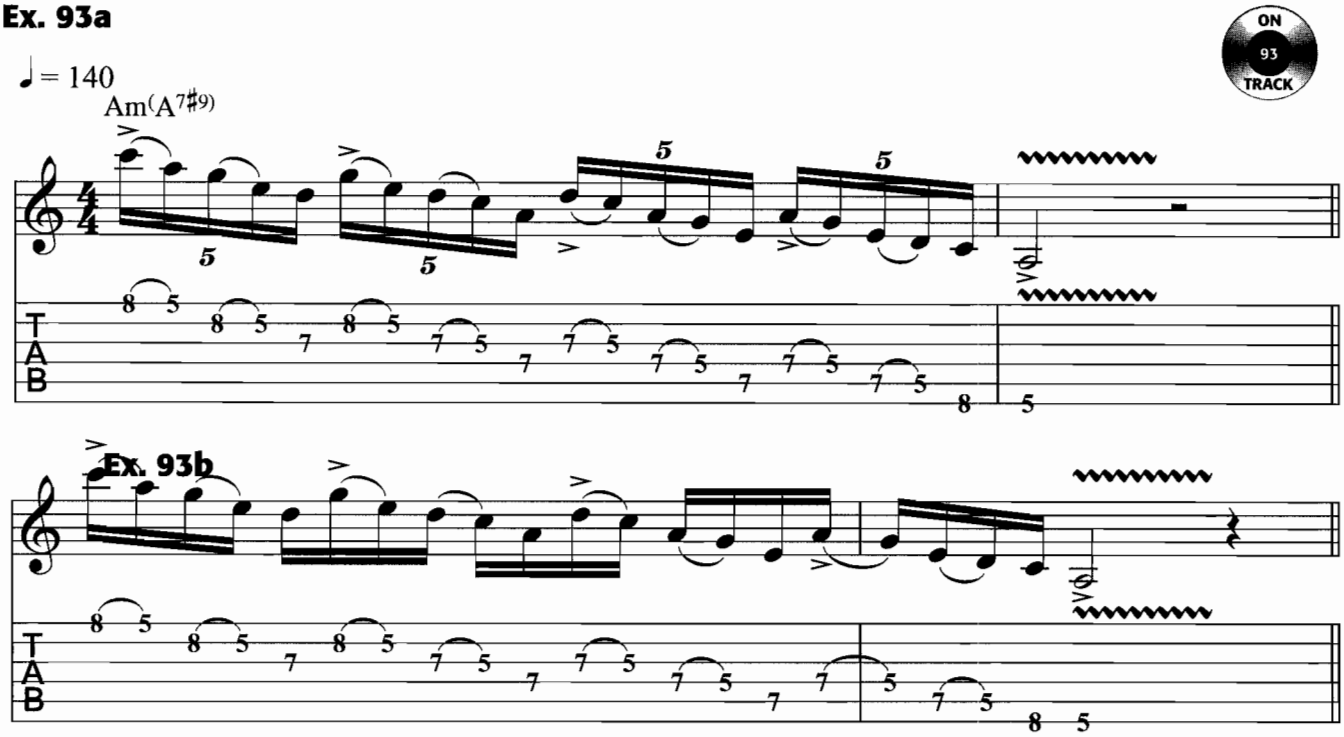
Applications: Same as Ex. 91.

Scale Sources: *E* pentatonic minor, *G* pentatonic major, *C* Lydian, *A* Dorian.

Example 93a & 93b

Example 93a superimposes a descending five-note *A* pentatonic minor sequence—which skips to a lower adjacent string on each downbeat—over repetitive quintuplets. In Ex. 93b, the same notes are spread over even 16th-note groupings. Note how this encompasses an extra beat.

Ex. 93a



Ex. 93b

Tip: Apply the same substitution rules from Ex. 91 and Ex. 92, and both of these examples can also function as *C* pentatonic major licks. Additionally, you can play them over other diatonic harmonies to create *F* Lydian and *D* Dorian modal sounds. Experiment with your own sequences based on the concepts illustrated in these examples.

Suggested Accompaniment: Same as Ex. 91 and Ex. 92 transposed to *A* minor/*C* major.

Applications: Same as Ex. 91 and Ex. 92 transposed to *A* minor/*C* major.

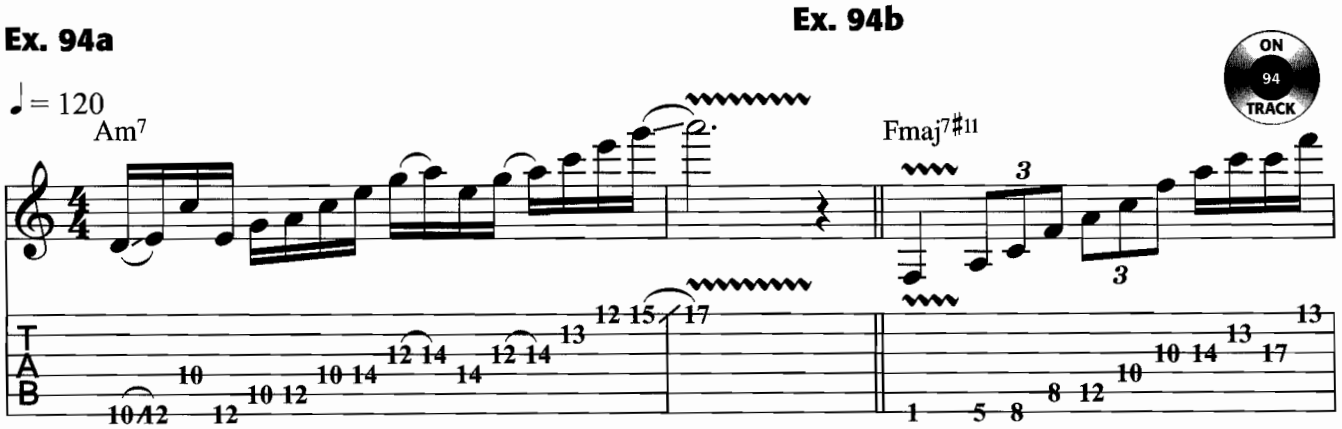
Scale Sources: *A* pentatonic minor, *C* pentatonic major, *F* Lydian, *D* Dorian.

Example 94a–94c

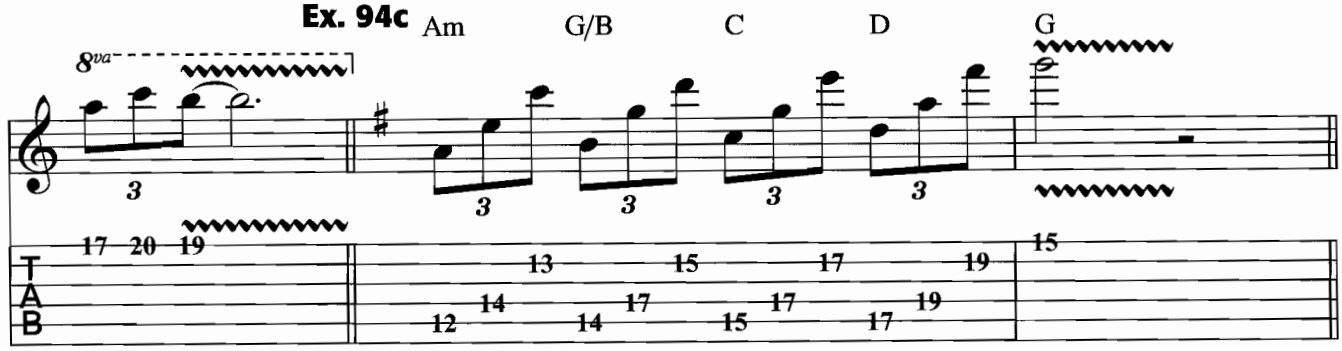
Johnson's supernatural cross-string arpeggios are legendary. Example 94a depicts a characteristic *Am7* move that spans over two octaves within seven frets. Kick it off with a third-finger slide from *D*—the only non-chord tone of the lot—and the rest of the fingering will fall neatly into place. The *B* note targeted at the end of three-octave-plus *F* arpeggio in Ex. 94b gives this run its distinctive Lydian flavor. The classical-style ascending diatonic arpeggios in Ex. 94c outline the IIm, I/III, IV, and V chords before resolving to a tonic high *G*. Think of this excellent example of voice leading as keeping track of a *G* major scale on three separate strings at the same time. Drop this one into bar 12 during your next 12-bar blues jam in *G* and watch the eyebrows rise!

Ex. 94a

Ex. 94b



Ex. 94c



Tip: Try substituting various diatonically related chords for those given in the first two examples. In addition to *Am7*, Ex. 92a works well over *C* (major 6), *F* (Lydian) or *Dm7* (Dorian). Similarly, Ex. 94b works with *Am7* (Aeolian) or *Dm7* (Dorian). And just for kicks, try targeting the following chords in bar 2 of Ex. 94c: *Em7*, *Am7*, and *C*.

Suggested Accompaniment: Example 94a works well with a wide variety of eighth- and 16th-based grooves, while Ex. 94b and Ex. 94c are applicable but not limited to triplet-based shuffle grooves.

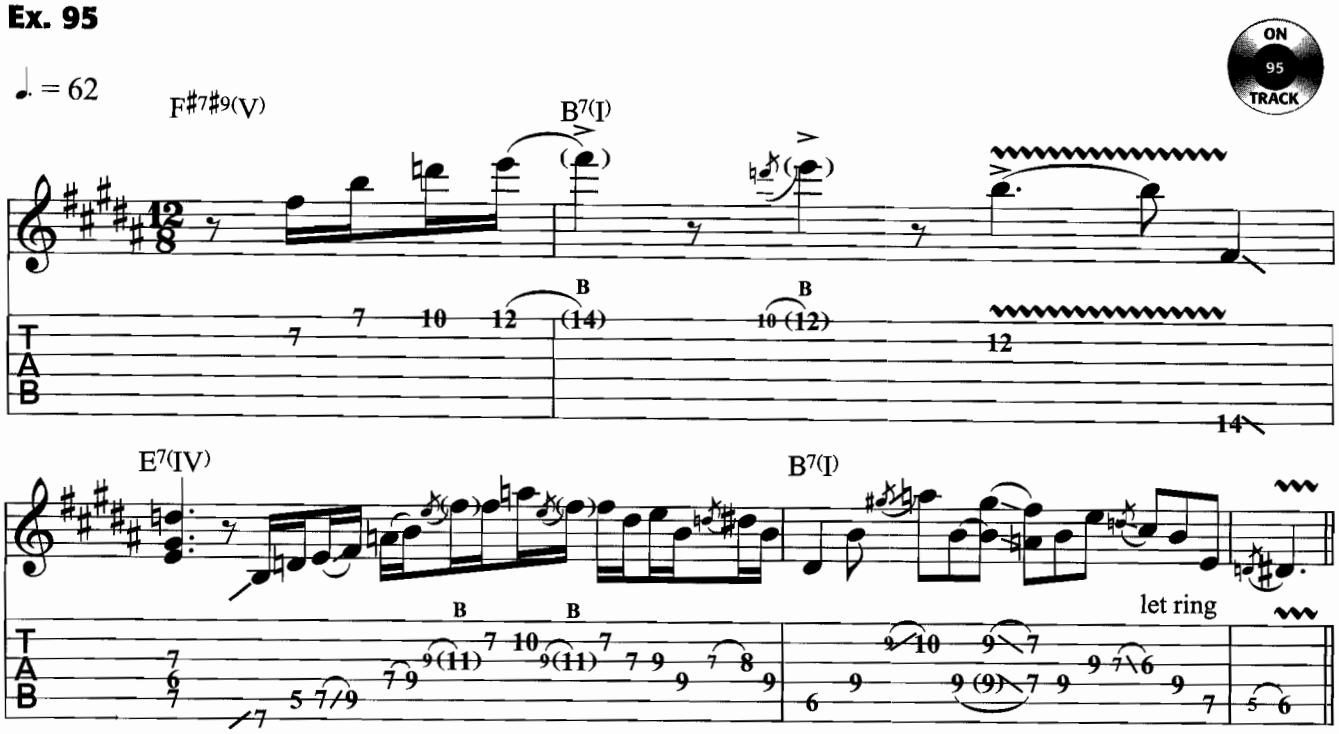
Applications: Play Ex. 94a and Ex. 94b over static, one-chord vamps utilizing given chords or substitutions, or over a diatonically related chord progression such as *Am–C–F*.

Scale Sources: *A* minor, *C* major, *F* Lydian, or *D* Dorian for Ex. 94a and 94b. *G* major, *E* minor, *C* Lydian, or *A* Dorian for Ex. 94c.

Example 95

Let's explore some EJ-style slow blues licks reminiscent of his improvisations during performances of Jimi Hendrix's classic "Red House," a staple in Johnson's live set. Example 95 begins with a four-note pickup into a fresh solo chorus and continues over the song's quick-change I–IV–I (*B7–E7–B7*) progression. Barre the top two strings at the seventh fret with your first finger, then shift into tenth position by fretting the 4–5 (*E–F*) bend that peaks on the downbeat of bar 1 with your third finger. This aligns your index finger to play the tenth-fret King/Vaughan–style ♭3–4 (*D–E*) bend on beat 2. Be sure to observe the eighth rests that follow each bend—they're an integral part of the phrase. In bar 2, we establish the "quick change" to the IV chord and preface the following three beats of 16th-note action with a three-note *E7* voicing on beat *one*. This method of telegraphing a chord change before an improvised single-note run is a great way to fill out the sound in a power trio setting. Begin the IV lick with a third-finger slide into the *B* on the second eighth-note of beat *two* to set up the slide back to seventh position on the last 16th-note in the same beat. It's unusual to employ the key's 3—*D♯*, in this case—over the IV change where it acts as the chord's 7, but Johnson pulls it off here by using it to anticipate the return to the I chord. Note how the broken minor-sixth interval on the first beat of bar 3 outlines the 3 (*D♯*) and root of *B7*. The rest of the lick centers around a pair of sliding broken sixth intervals (beats *two* and *three*) and an off-the-beaten-path descending *E6* arpeggio—both of which allude to the IV chord—before locking back into the I chord with a grace-hammered ♭3–3 (*D–D♯*) on the downbeat of the next measure. Use your pinky or third finger for the grace-note slide to *A* and barre both broken sixths with your first finger, and the fingering for the remainder of the lick will fall naturally into place. It doesn't get much tastier than this, folks!

Ex. 95



Tip: Try playing this example into and over bars 5–8 in the same 12-bar progression. Listen to "Red House."

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues à la "Red House." Comp appropriate I-chord (*B7* or *B9*) and IV-chord (*E7* or *E9*) voicings as follows: Dotted-quarter-note on beat *one*; staccato quarter-note followed by half-step chromatic neighbor chord on the last eighth-note (*B♭7/9* or *C7/9* for I, and *E♭7/9* or *F7/9* for IV); dotted half-note on beats *three* and *four*.

Applications: Play into and over bars 1–4 in a quick-change 12-bar slow-blues progression in the key of *B*.

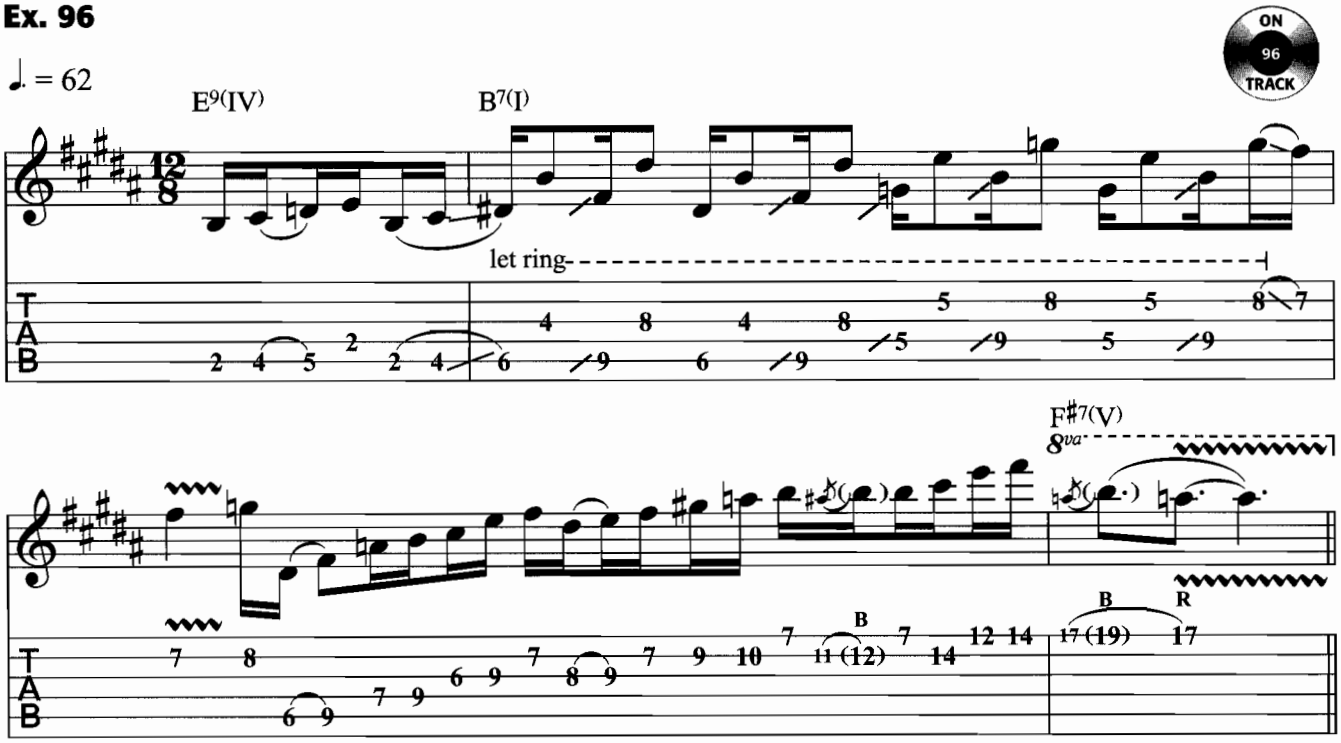
Scale Sources: *B* pentatonic minor with added 3 (*D♯*), 6 (*G♯*), and 9 (*C♯*).

Example 96

Continuing in the same groove, Ex. 96 contains another primo demonstration of Johnson's signature intervallic designs. We're coming out of the IV (*E9*) change in bar 6 and crossing two bars of the I chord (*B7*) in bars 7 and 8 as we head for the V chord (*F♯7*) in bar 3. The choice of notes in the one-beat pickup is key—the first four outline an ascending *B* minor scale fragment, but, as we repeat this move, the *D* is raised to *D♯* to coincide with the return to the I chord on the downbeat of bar 1. Beautiful! This note also sets the events of the first measure into motion. Adopting a jazzy, syncopated rhythmic motif, we begin by alternating between broken minor- and major-sixth intervals to create inversions of a *B* triad on beats *one* and *two*. On beat *three*, we jump to the fourth and second strings, reverse the quality of the broken sixth intervals (major before minor), and play them a half-step high-

er to imply a ♭II chord (*Cmaj7*, in this case) typically found in bar 3 of "Stormy Monday"–style progressions. This half-step chromatic-neighbor concept briefly extends into bar 2–the high *C* in the middle of beat *one* once again implies the ♭II (*C*) chord–before we lock back into the I chord with a blazing run of 16th-notes that spans twelve frets and culminates in a high *B* bend and release to *A* over our target V chord. Note EJ's trademark half-step 7–root (*A#–B*) unison bend during beat *four* of bar 3–it's a sweeter version of the T-Bone/SRV–style ♭7–7 bend.

Ex. 96



Tip: Finger each of the broken sixth intervals in bar 1 as if you were going to play both notes at the same time, then memorize their shapes and locations. Try playing this example into and over bars 3–5 in a quick-change 12-bar *B* blues progression.

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues à la "Red House." Same as Ex. 95 adapted to IV–I–V progression.
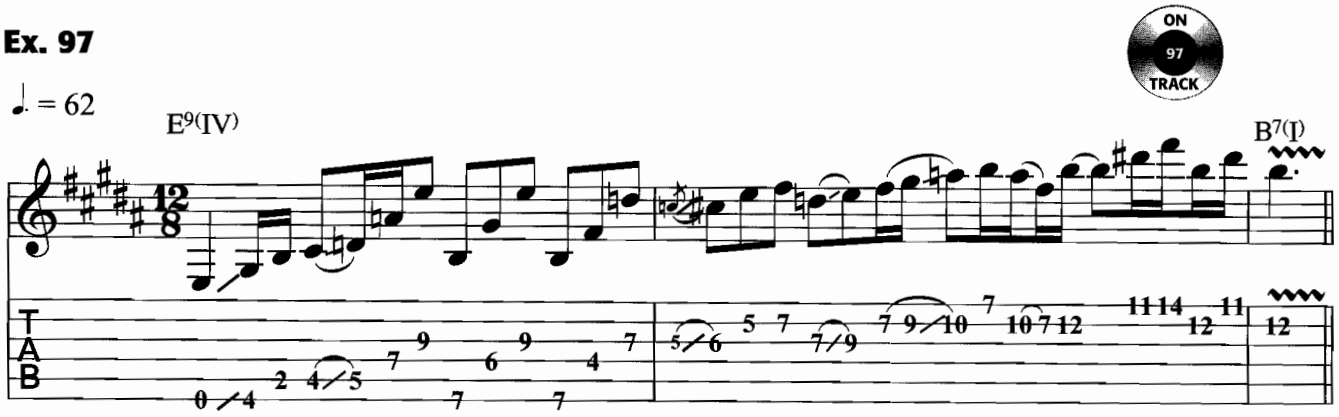
Applications: Play into and over bars 7–9 in a quick-change 12-bar slow-blues progression in the key of *B*.

Scale Sources: *B* minor, *B* pentatonic minor, *B* major, and *B* pentatonic major with added *Cmaj7* chord tones (*C* and *B*).

Example 97

Wide, lower-register broken chord shapes segue to a slippery ascending run that ends with a clarion call *B* major arpeggio in the regal-sounding riff in Ex. 97. Opening with an arpeggiated *E6* chord, we move quickly to *D5add9* (spelled root–5–9, or *D–A–E*) followed by spacious *E/B* and *E9/B* voicings. Note how the latter two arpeggios consist of minor-sixth intervals played over a *B* pedal-tone. Again, you'll want to finger the broken arpeggios on beats *one* through *three* as three-note chord shapes. In bar 2, we combine *B* pentatonic major and *B* pentatonic minor elements and utilize three position shifts before ending with a trumpet-like *B* arpeggio sequence.

Ex. 97



Tip: Exploit the chord shapes in bar 1 by moving each voice diatonically through the *B* Dorian mode (*B, C♯, D, E, F♯, G♯, A*) for the IV chord, or the *B* Mixolydian mode (*B, C♯, D♯, E, F♯, G♯, A*) for the I chord. Memorize these grips and apply them to similar licks of your own design.

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues à la "Red House." Same as Ex. 95 and Ex. 96 adapted to IV–I progression.

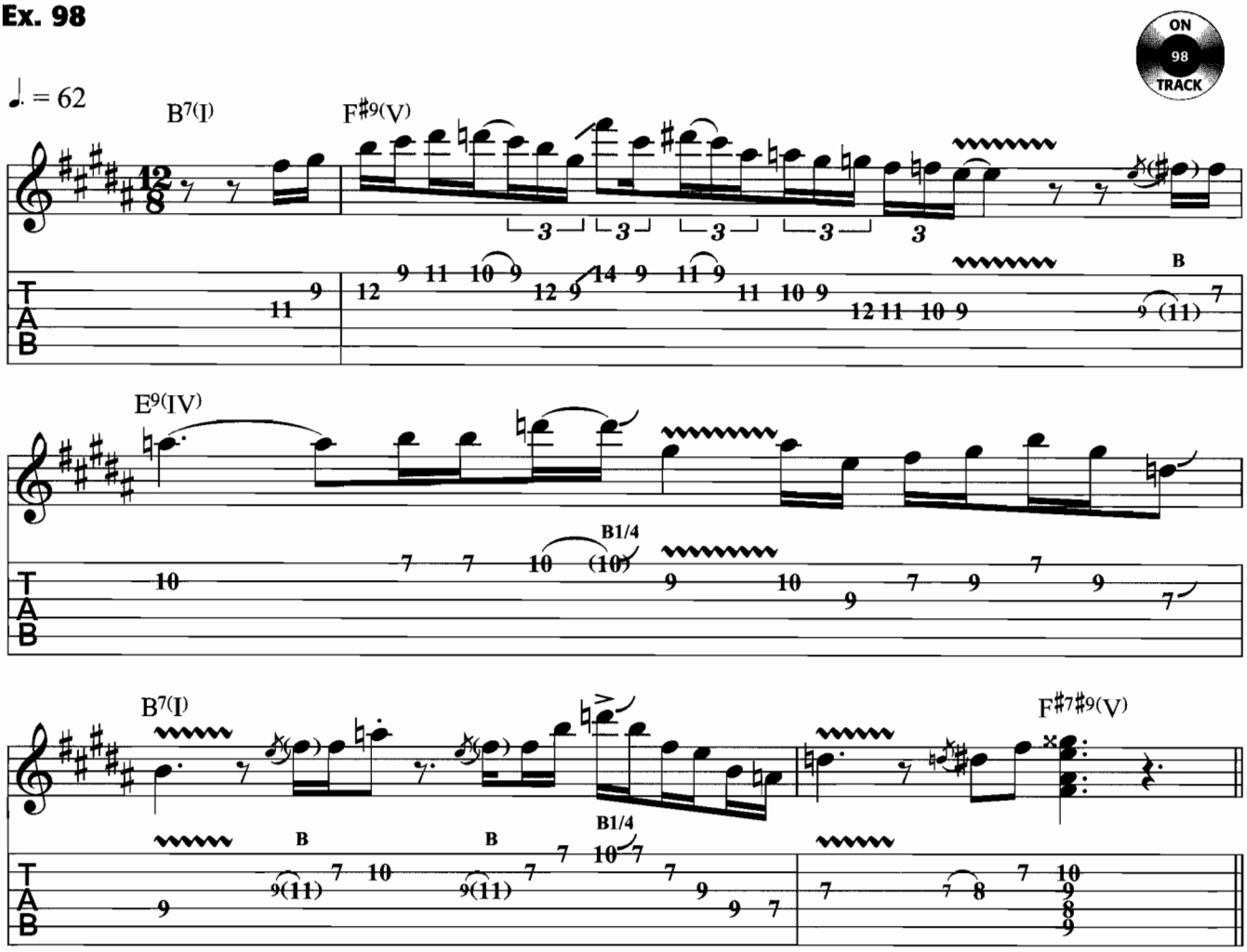
Applications: Play over bars 5–7 in a quick-change 12-bar *B* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *E6, E5add9, E/B,* and *E9/B* arpeggios (bar 1), and *B* pentatonic major combined with *B* pentatonic minor plus added *B* arpeggio (bars 2 and 3).

Example 98

This busy "Red House"–style V–IV–I–V turnaround flies as high and proud as the Texas flag—a fitting finale to our EJ analysis and this entire Texas blues-rock experience. Look closely and you'll discover that the pickup and first beat in bar 1—both played in ninth position—are derived from the *G♯* blues scale. It's an ingenious substitution; this scale functions as the relative *B* pentatonic major scale with an added ♭3 (*D*). On beat *two*, we switch to *F♯* pentatonic major for two eighths and segue directly to a six-note descending chromatic run that cleverly targets the V chord's defining ♭7 (*E*). The emphasis on key chord tones extends to the IV chord run in bar 2, where the *D*'s and *G♯*'s define the *E7* tonality. The I–V progression in bars 3 and 4 features contrasting stop-and-go phrasing, a quarter-bent ♯9 (*D*), and a cool descending *B7sus4* arpeggio that targets a stinging, heavily vibrated ♭3 (*D*). Wrap it up with the grace-hammered ♭3–3 and 5 (*F♯*) that lead into a single *F♯7♯9* V-chord punctuation. Take it!

Ex. 98



Tip: Remember to transpose this and all of your favorite licks from this book to all keys. When you can visualize playing any lick away from your instrument, it's yours for keeps. Rock on, y'all!

Suggested Accompaniment: Slow 12/8 blues à la "Red House." Same as Ex. 95, Ex. 96, and Ex. 97 adapted to a V-IV–I–V progression.

Applications: Play into and over bars 9–12 in a quick-change 12-bar *B* blues progression.

Scale Sources: *G♯* blues/*B* pentatonic major with added ♭3 (*D*), *F♯* pentatonic major with chromatic passing tones and added ♭7 (*E*), and *B* blues with added 3 (*D♯*).

That's it, pardners. The next chorus is all yours. Absorb everything you can from all of the great Texans profiled in these pages. Follow their collective lead and blend this diverse posse of styles into something completely different. (Just make damn sure it's BIG!) Happy trails!

Acknowledgments

A Texas-sized round of thanks to Richard Johnston, Amy Miller, Gail Saari, Matt Kelsey, Kevin Becketti, and Nina Lesowitz at Backbeat Books, and to Jas Obrecht, Dan Forte, and Dave Rubin.

As always, my deepest love and gratitude goes to Mary Lou, Deidre, and my extended Gress, Tresolini, and Arnold families.

Finally, a tip of the ten-gallon to the subjects of this book, as well as to all of their contemporaries who escaped inclusion in this volume. Thanks for the perspiration!

CD Credits

CD produced, engineered and performed by Jesse Gress at Jesilu Music, Woodstock, New York.

All licks performed live using a 1962 Gibson Les Paul/SG ebony-block model, 2003 Gibson Custom Shop 1957 Les Paul goldtop reissue (Note: All Billy Gibbons-style licks were played with a U.S. quarter in lieu of the recommended Mexican peso.), 1965 Fender Stratocaster, and 1991 Fender Custom Shop "swirly" Stratocaster with Jeff Beck neck and body by Gary Brawer, played through Line 6's Guitar Port.

All music notation produced by Jesse Gress using Sibelius 2 software.

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TEXAS SIZED BLUES!

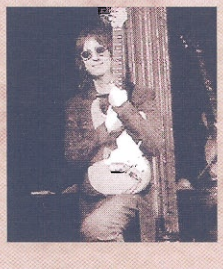


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Backbeat Books
An Imprint of Hal Leonard Corporation

ISBN-10: 0-87930-876-1 US $19.95
ISBN-13: 978-0-87930-876-6

51995

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